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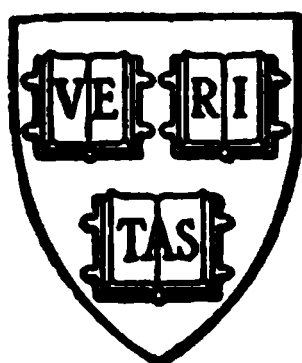
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Dante's Divine Comedy

The First Part Hell

Translated in the Metre of the Original
with Notes

By Thomas Brooksbank M.A. Camb.

O voi, che avete gli intelletti sani,
Mirate la dottrina che s' asconde
Sotto 'l velame degli versi strani.
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IN EARNEST AND SINCERE GRATITUDE

FOR YEARS OF PERFECT LOVE AND CARE

I DEDICATE THIS TRANSLATION,

TO

MY DEAR FATHER.

OH ! that 'twere mine to read what thou hast sung
By thy full sunlight, not my taper scant
Whence o'er thy page broad shadows fall aslant,
Thou wondrous Dante, aged, yet so young !
That as I muse thy woods and bow'rs among
Of thy abundance thou such part wouldst grant,
That I thy oaks and myrtles might transplant
To the rich soil wherefrom our Shakspeare sprung ;
To show my land thy fancies welling thick—
Thy human soul, which every weakness scans—
Which tents all low desire unto the quick,
And from its lofty presence falsehood bans ;
But cheers the weary, heals the spirit-sick,
And nerves the craven's spirit into Man's.

I HAVE no apology to offer for putting forth upon the world this new attempt at rendering Dante into English, and I will not endeavour to make one. I must leave it to the judgment of the public, and if the opinion of those capable of judging be against me, I must only hope for courage to endure, and temper and wisdom enough to profit by, their censure.

I was impelled to the long and difficult task by an enthusiasm for the Poem, and by that alone; and I can truly assert that, so far as I have yet advanced in it, my enthusiasm for it has suffered no decline. I feel that in this consists the best hope I have, that what I have completed may not be deemed unworthy, and that a feeling which has lasted so long will sustain me through the two remaining "Canzoni," with which I shall proceed as quickly as the nature of the work, and my own sense of what is decorous to the great Poet, will allow; for nothing seems to me more unpardonable than to publish a translation of such a

Poem, without having honestly done one's *best*, and especially without allowing such time for deliberation as it must require. The mere translating of the Part now presented occupied me a year and three-quarters, during three months of which, however, I was abroad, and did not touch it. I have already, however, in manuscript several Cantos of Purgatory.

My chief, almost my sole, object has been to make a translation which, preserving the form and pressure of the greatest Epic since the old classic days, may be intelligible and readable to an English reader unacquainted with Italian. I have not aimed at exaggerating its beauties (how could any one succeed in such an aim ?) or diminishing its defects, and, above all, I have not sought to tone down or to increase any of the ruggedness of thought or speech which, to one who has considered the life of Dante, is so characteristic of the man as he lived,—which, I think, cannot fail to be traced upon the grand though stern features with which the world is so familiar. Notwithstanding that my main desire is that which I have stated, I have chosen the metre of the original for my version,—a selection which I think in almost every case the best way of preserving the spirit of a Poem ; for it seems

to me, that in metre there is almost as much soul as in language ; and I feel convinced that, though it will at first sound unusual (and may sound at the outset a little uncouth even) in the ears of many readers, few will fail to observe, if they persevere, how well it suits the subject, and they will confess that in it one so portentous and severe will find fitting and noble expression. It appeared to me, besides, that there was but a choice between the *terza rima* of the original and blank verse, which latter is the most rare and difficult of metres, though *legion* writes ten-syllable lines. If readers of Dante himself should honour me with their notice, they I am sure will need no apology for anything that reminds them of him, however long the interval.

I have compiled a few historical and other Notes, where I have thought them necessary, and have even explained such passages as an educated Italian in reading the original would wish to have explained, and which in few editions are printed without comment and illustration. -

I think it right to say, that in writing my own I have been assisted by no other translation than the excellent one of Mr. Cary, which I have frequently

consulted, and to which I am pleased to avow my obligation. Since I have completed, copied, and twice recopied¹ the Hell, and written all my Notes, I have seen Mr. Cayley's beautiful version of that part of the Divine Comedy.

To several friends I owe more thanks than I can pay, and were I to begin to express my acknowledgments to many who have given me valuable suggestions, I should be indeed bankrupt in gratitude. First amongst these are my excellent friends Professor Pistrucci, of King's College, London, and Timothy Holmes, Esquire, of St. George's Hospital, who have been my chief guides in all cases of difficulty. I know that they and all will believe me when I say that I have felt their kindness deeply.

LINCOLN'S INN,
Feb. 1854.

¹ I may mention that each of these re-copyings was made with the Italian open before me, and was therefore a complete revision.

Since writing these few remarks, I have read parts of Mr. Pollock's *Inferno*, and about six cantos of Mr. Dayman's.

THE DIVINE COMEDY.

HELL.

THE FIRST CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—The Poet having lost his way in a wild and gloomy wood wanders disconsolately through the night, and as the sun rises he begins the ascent of a hill before him. He is here impeded by three wild beasts, and at length perceiving a solitary human figure, he calls upon it to assist him. It proves to be Virgil, who encourages him to explore the three worlds beyond the tomb, Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, promising himself to be his guide through the two former, and that a worthier spirit shall conduct him through the third. Dante gladly undertakes the journey. The day has passed in this discourse.

MIDWAY upon the journey of my days¹
I found myself within a wood² so drear,
That the direct path nowhere met my gaze.

¹ In this verse Dante intimates that, at the time when he supposes his vision to have taken place, he was thirty-five years of age, considering seventy years as the time allotted to man. He was born in May, 1265, and thus, in conjunction with a yet more distinct allusion to the time contained in c. xxi., 113, we can fix the time when the action began as Good Friday, 1300. The Poem was written during many years after, but previously to 1321, in which year Dante died. Many events subsequent to 1300 are mentioned, but always in the form of prophecies.

² The whole Poem is an allegory, and I think we shall not be far wrong if we give an allegorical meaning to every passage at all

Alas! how hard the task to make it clear,
 How thick, and rough, and savage was this wood, 5
 To fancy which alone renews my fear.
 So bitter was it death is scarce more rude.
 But I will mention all that there befell,
 That I may thoroughly declare the good.
 How first I enter'd I can scarcely tell, 10
 For heedless from the truthful path I stray'd,
 Heavy with slumber I could not dispel.
 But when I reach'd a mountain, where that glade
 Did all at once abruptly terminate,
 Which at the first my heart had so dismay'd, 15
 Thence looking up, I saw in radiate
 Beams of that star the mountain's shoulders dress'd,
 Which leadeth man aright in ev'ry strait.
 Thereon the fear was somewhat laid to rest,
 Which throng'd the stagnant lake,³ my heart, with
 cares, 20
 Throughout the night I pass'd so sore distress'd.

capable of bearing one. Frequently the same object seems to me to be invested with different significations. The wood is generally supposed to mean the wild barbarism of the Poet's time, but beyond this, I think he may have meant the uncivilized people by whom he was surrounded. See c. iv., v. 66, where he calls the crowding souls a wood.

³ "Lago del cor." I think that Dante uses this simile to express the state of torpidity and listlessness in which he passed the time until he discovered that he was astray. How long that may be has been much discussed, but I think that if any time is to be fixed it

And as a man with harass'd breathing fares,
 Who, having scap'd from ocean to the shore,
 Turns back toward the dangerous deep—and stares :
 Even thus my spirit, flying evermore, 25
 Yet turn'd to view the perils undergone,
 Whence none had ever fled with life before.
 My weary frame I rested, then sped on
 Towards that lonely mountain, in such guise
 That my firm foot was still the lower one.⁴ 30
 When where the mountain first began to rise
 Behold! a panther,⁵ nimble, leaping light,
 Cover'd with spotted skin before mine eyes.

may be well taken to be from 1290, the year of the death of his early love, Beatrice Portinari, who, in c. xxx. of Purgatory, reproaches him for his wandering immediately after her death.

⁴ No verse has been more disputed than this ; some holding that it implies that Dante had begun the ascent, whilst others think it means that he was keeping in the valley. The word “piaggia” means an incline originally, but it has an extended meaning, and the line seems more descriptive of one walking on a level, than on a hill-side. As to the allegory, all happily agree that he represents himself as having a greater tendency to remain in the valley of passion, than to climb the steep towards the sun of reason which shines above.

⁵ The three beasts which encounter Dante are allegorical; the panther being luxury, the lion ambition, and the she-wolf avarice. Besides this moral signification, I do not doubt but that Dante gives them a political one, and that in his panther he intends the fickle Florence, split into the White and Black factions; in his lion the French power, and in his she-wolf the temporal domination of the Papacy. It is the last, it will be observed, which Dante represents

Nor did this panther vanish from my sight,
 Nay, further progress to impede he strove, 35
 That many times I turn'd again for flight.
 'Twas now the earliest morning, and above
 Rising with those same stars⁶ the sun appears,
 Which were about him, when Almighty love
 First mov'd the beauteous planets in their spheres; 40
 And well with hope my spirit might rebound,
 Seeing the hour of daybreak, and the year's
 Sweet season, and the beast's gay hues around.
 Yet not so strong, but that I fear'd anew
 Beholding where a lion paced the ground, 45
 Which came with head uplifted and as tho'
 Rabid with hunger, as I deem'd on me!
 And even the air seem'd trembling at his view.

as the main obstacle to his progress, and it follows in the wake of the Court of France. In 1300 Philip the Fair was King of France, and Boniface VIII. was Pope. Albert I. was Emperor of Germany.

⁶ The sun was then in Aries, so that Dante supposes the world to have been created in spring, and follows Virgil, b. II., *Georg.* 336, which Dryden renders :

"In this soft season (let me dare to sing),
 The world was hatch'd by heav'n's imperial King,
 In prime of all the year, and holidays of spring."

And a few verses lower he gives the reason :

"Nor could the tender new creation bear
 The excessive heats or coldness of the year;
 But chill'd by winter, or by summer fir'd,
 The middle temper of the spring requir'd."

And on his track a she-wolf, greedily,
 Who in her leanness laden was with want, 50
 By whom were many comfortless; and she
 Increas'd by fear my heaviness, that scant
 Was now my hope to gain the mountain-height,
 Such horror issued from her aspect gaunt.
 Like one amassing riches with delight, 55
 Who now perceives the hour of loss draw nigh,
 Whose ev'ry thought is weeping and affright:
 Such I became; for restless, threat'ningly,
 That beast still facing me by slow degrees
 Where Sol is silent drove me tremblingly. 60
 But falling downwards, lo! my faint eye sees
 A figure near me, who from silence long
 Seem'd to be voiceless; 'midst the desert trees
 Spying that solitary form, in strong
 Accents I cried to him: "Have pity thou, 65
 Whether to shades or mortals thou belong!"
 He said: "A mortal once—no mortal now;
 My parents dwelt in Lombardy, and they
 Were both of Mantuan origin, I trow;
 Born under Julius in his later day,⁷ 70
 'Neath mild Augustus' rule I lived in Rome,
 Whilst false and lying gods maintain'd their sway.

⁷ The person selected by Dante as his guide and master is Virgil, and many reasons have been given for this choice. Amongst these, the great veneration in which Dante held his works (although in c.

I was a poet, and sang the just one whom

Anchises call'd his son, who came from Troy

When in the flames proud Ilion met her doom. 75

But thou, why turn'st thou to renew annoy?

Wherefore dost thou not climb yon cheerful mount,

The origin and cause of ev'ry joy?"

iv., 96, he puts Homer as the first of poets), that he was the greatest (at all events) of Roman poets—that the origin of Rome was the subject of his epic—that the sixth book of the *Æneid* may have suggested the whole scheme of the Divine Comedy—that in an age of immorality, both of life and literature, he was comparatively spotless—and others. Virgil has therefore been generally regarded as the impersonation of human virtue and intellect, unenlightened by Christian grace. But in his selection there is a meaning, the discovery of which we owe, I believe, to Signor Rossetti, who, admitting Virgil to mean all this, maintains that his chief attribute is *political* philosophy—that Virgil was the poet of *Æneas*, the parent of Rome (c. ii., 20), and from whom in a direct line the *Cæsars* claimed descent—that he was the poet of the new Roman Empire, and the intimate associate of *Cæsar's* nephew and heir; and to the support of this view v. 70 in the text contributes greatly, for Virgil the *man* was born upwards of twenty-five years before the death of Julius, but the new political order in Rome, by *Cæsar's* assumption of the Dictatorship (which Virgil, according to Rossetti, typifies), was only 'born' after the battle of Pharsalia, B.C. 48, and *Cæsar* was slain within four years. We may see how Dante abominated this assassination, for in c. xxxiv. he places Brutus and Cassius as the only sharers of the fate of Judas Iscariot. See also c. x., 63. Upon these considerations, and remembering the political life of Dante, his aversion to the temporal power of the Popes, although a fervent Catholic, his devotion to the Ghibelline cause, regarding the Emperors of Germany as the legitimate heirs and successors of the *Cæsars*, I cannot but concur in Signor Rossetti's view. There is only one passage which conflicts with this interpretation. It is in c. xxviii., 94—102.

“ Oh! art thou Virgil? say, art thou that fount
Which spreads so vast a stream of eloquence?” 80
Thus I replied to him, with bashful front.
“ Oh! of all poets, thou the joy intense,
The shining light! do thou the anxious care,
The love I gave thy volume recompense.
Thou art my Master, thou my Author rare; 85
Thou art the one from whom alone I learn’d
The gracious style that makes my name so fair.
Thou seest the brute at sight whereof I turn’d;
Protect me from her, soul renown’d and wise,
She thrills my veins and pulses when discern’d.” 90
“ Thou needs must seek some other path,” replies
The Sage, when he beheld the tears I shed,
“ If thou wouldst shun the desert which here lies.
For yonder brute, which makes thee weep with dread,
Suffers no man to pass her road, nor will 95
She cease from hindering till life has fled.
Her nature is so curst and prone to ill
That her desire is never satiate,
And after food she hath more hunger still.
Many the beasts with whom she yet will mate, 100
And hath already mated, till one hound⁸
With agony her course shall terminate.

⁸ This is sometimes said to be Uguiccione della Faggiuola, but more frequently Can’ Grande della Scala, Lord of Verona, which city lies between Feltro, a town of the Marca Trivigiana, and Feltro, a town of the Marca di Ancona. With him Dante took refuge when

He nor by lands nor lucre shall be bound,
 But wisdom, virtue, love the arms he'll wield,
 And 'twixt two Feltros shall his home be found. 105
 He shall preserve our humble Latian field
 For which the spotless maid Camilla died,
 Nisus, Euryalus, and Turnus spill'd
 Their life-blood. Thro' our cities far and wide
 Pursuing, he shall drive her back to Hell, 110
 Whence envy first the outlet did provide.
 But I, for thy great gain consid'ring well,
 Do bid thee follow; I will lead thee on
 Hence thro' eternal space, where horrible
 Despairing groans shall reach thee, where anon 115
 Thou shalt behold each hoary anguish'd ghost,
 Making for second death an endless moan.⁹
 And thou shalt witness those who have not lost
 All their contentment even in the fire,¹
 But hope with time to join the blessed host. 120
 And if to mount to these² be thy desire,
 A worthier soul³ must lead thee; in my stead
 She shall remain with thee when I retire.

banished from Florence in 1308, and I cannot doubt that this is the person alluded to, unless it means that such a captain is needful for the salvation of Italy. She seems to be waiting for such a leader even to this day!

⁹ The damned.

¹ The spirits in purgatory.

² Those in paradise.

³ This is Beatrice, daughter of Folco Portinari, a nobleman of Florence, with whom, when only nine years of age, Dante fell in

The Emperor who ruleth overhead,
Because I was a rebel,⁴ order'd thus, 125
That to His city none by me be led.
There He controls—elsewhere imperious
He sways ; but there His city, His high throne,
And His elect, oh ! race felicitous !”
Then I replied : “ By Him thou didst not own, 130
Oh ! Poet, I conjure thine aid in this,
That I may 'scape this ill and worse unknown,
That thou wilt guide me thro' the drear abyss,
Where thou hast said are those in misery,
To see where blessed Peter's gateway⁵ is.” 135
He started then, I follow'd eagerly.

love ; she was a few months younger. This strange love, which was never destined to be gratified, was cherished by him throughout his life, and it was not till after the death of Beatrice, in 1290, that he married Gemma, a daughter of the great house de' Donati, but the marriage was not a happy one.

⁴ “ A rebel,” that is, ignorant of Christianity. The fate of those who so died is told in c. iv.

⁵ According to Dante the custody of the gate of Purgatory, as well as of Paradise, is entrusted to St. Peter, who places an angel to guard it. See Purg., c. ix., 78.

THE SECOND CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—On starting, doubts beset the mind of Dante whether he is worthy of the great enterprise on which he is about to embark. Virgil combats his misgivings, and tells him that his interference to deliver him from the beasts was by the direct command of Beatrice herself. His doubts vanquished by Virgil's arguments, he throws himself heart and soul into the undertaking, and follows Virgil as his guide.

NOW day was waning, and the twilight brown
Was freeing from their labour and their care
The animals of earth; when I alone
Prepared myself the twofold strife to dare
With my compassion and the dreadful way, 5
Which memory unerring shall declare.
Oh! Muses, oh! high Genius, aid I pray;
Oh! Mind, that hast recorded what I saw,
Here do thou thy nobility display!
Thus I began: "Oh! Bard that art my law, 10
Prove thou how strong my constancy may be,
Before thou trust me to this path of awe.
Of Silvius' father¹ thou hast told, that he
Whilst yet he was corruptible, attain'd
To realms eterne, and was there bodily. 15

¹ Silvius was the son of Æneas and Lavinia.

If the Opponent of all evil² deign'd
This grace to him, as knowing there should spring
From him achievements vast and chiefs unstain'd,
It seems no marvel to the reasoning;
For he of glorious Rome and all her state 20
In heav'n sublime was chosen sire and king.
And they were stablish'd, (thus the truth to state,)
For ever in that holy place where be
The successors of holier Peter. Great
Was that his journey as we learn from thee; 25
And from that wondrous knowledge to him taught
Arose his victory and the Papal See.
'The chosen vessel'³ too was thither caught
To bring to us assurance of that creed
Whereby alone salvation's way is sought. 30
But how shall I arrive? who shall concede
Me passage? Nor Æneas I, nor Paul;
Nor I nor others deem me worth such meed.
If backward from this enterprise I fall
'Tis that I dread 't will prove foolhardihood; 35
Oh! Sage, tho' I speak ill thou knowest all."
And as a man who unwill's what he would
Shifting his soul for love of something new,
Till nought survives of all his earlier mood:

² "The Opponent of all evil,"—that is, God.

³ St. Paul is so called, Acts ix. 15. The word "caught" is the word used by St. Paul, 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians, xii. 2.

So chang'd I on that shore of sombre hue ; 40
Reflection had devour'd the enterprise
That I was erst so anxious to pursue.
" If I have gather'd right thy speech implies,"
Then answer'd me his shade magnanimous,
" That 'neath a craven fear thy spirit lies ; 45
By which mankind is often hamper'd thus
That from a noble labour they recoil,
As from a twilight shadow timorous
Some animal. To free thee from such toil
I will unfold to thee why first I came, 50
And hearing what I griev'd for thy turmoil.
'Mid the suspended⁴ nation was my frame,
When now a lady,⁵ blest and beautiful
That I implor'd her orders, call'd my name.
The very Day-star to her eyes was dull ; 55
And swiftly thus began with softest tone
Her Angel-voice in accents pitiful :
' Oh ! courteous spirit, Mantua's gentle son,
Whose glories still throughout the world extend,
And shall endure while Nature moveth on ; 60
Upon that desert steep behold my friend,
Who loveth truly not my fate but me,
Is so beset that he will backward wend.

⁴ The spirits in limbo, neither saved nor damned.—See c. iv.

⁵ Beatrice Portinari, mentioned in the notes to c. i. She is here and throughout the Poem the symbol of Christian grace, human virtue purified and elevated by faith.

I shudder lest already lost he be,
 Or that I rose too late to give him aid 65
 From what I heard in Heaven. Hastily
 Arise, and with thy delicate speech persuade,
 With ev'ry thought and act that may preserve
 Him free, assist him, that my fears be laid.
 For I am Beatrice, whom thou shalt serve; 70
 I come from that dear place⁶ for which I yearn,
 Whence love that bids me speak compell'd me swerve.
 But when unto my Master I return,
 To Him thy praises I will often sing.'
 Therewith she ceased. I answer'd in my turn: 75
 'Oh! Maid of Grace, from whom alone doth spring
 That influence whereby mankind exceeds
 All things heav'n's lesser sphere inhabiting;⁷
 Such ecstasy from thy behest proceeds
 That 't would seem late were now thy bidding done: 80
 No further speech thy tender purpose needs.
 But tell the reason why thou wast so prone
 From that vast space, for which thy wishes burn,
 To hasten downward to this central zone.'
 And she replied: 'What thou desir'st to learn 85
 So thoroughly, I will tell thee, and in brief,
 Wherefore I do not fear to pass this bourne.

⁶ Paradise.

⁷ According to the Ptolemæan system the lunar circle is the smallest, and this revolves round the earth fixed in its centre.

Only such things as may cause others grief
 And evil should be dreaded—only these ;
 All others not, for such there is relief. 90
 And by the grace which GOD to me decrees,
 I am made such your torments harm not me,
 Those fiery flames cause me no agonies.
 In heav'n a gentle dame⁸ who weeps to see
 The obstacles that his advance oppose, 95
 To whom I send thee, breaks the stern decree.
 Calling Lucia,⁹ she her purpose shows :
 ' Thy faithful servant needs thy pow'r to save ;
 To thee do I commend him.' Straight she goes
 Who against cruelty was ever brave, 100
 And soon she reach'd the spot whereon I stood,
 And seated near me Rachel, old and grave.
 She spoke : ' Oh ! Beatrice, true praise of God,
 Why aidest thou not him who for thy sake,
 So great his love, surpass'd the multitude? 105
 Hearest thou not the sighs his sorrows make?
 Foreseest thou not his death in that rough stream,¹
 Whence ocean's self could no new fierceness take?'

⁸ The Divine Mercy is thus personified as tempering the judgments of the Almighty.

⁹ The Divine Grace, said by some to be derived from *lux*. By others, it is thought that Dante intended the Martyr of Syracuse; but in the case of these three women, it is most probable that he designed them to be both real and emblematic.

¹ The stream of human passions, mightier than the sea.

Never on earth did one so eager seem
To shun his losses and his gains to meet, 110
As, when her words were ended, I did teem
With haste descending from my blessed seat,
Relying on thine eloquence sincere,
Of thee and all who hear the joy complete.
Soon as from this discourse her will was clear, 115
She weeping turn'd her brilliant eyes aside,
So that I hasten'd more to reach thee here.
With thee as she commanded I abide,
And I have rescued thee from the grim brute,
Which o'er the lovely hill thy way denied. 120
What ails thee? Why, why thus irresolute?
Why does such cowardice thy soul possess?
Where is thy zeal, thy courage absolute,
When three such maids in endless blessedness
Make thee their constant care in heaven's court, 125
And such vast bliss my² words for thee express?"
As flow'rets which the frosts of night distort
Are shut and drooping, but at Sol's white beams
Unfold, and on their stems their head support:
Even so my fainting spirit he redeems; 130
Such goodly courage cours'd within my breast,
That I began like one who dauntless seems:

² Bliss promised to Dante by human wisdom through the words of Virgil, and by the higher wisdom personified in Beatrice.

“ Oh ! truly pitiful is she who press'd
To save me ! Kindly Thou who speddest thence,
Prompt in obedience to her true behest ! 135
Thy words for this emprise have ev'ry sense
So fill'd with eager longing, that behold !
I change to my first purpose ; lead me hence ;
One single will doth both our hearts enfold ;
Thou art my Lord, my Master, and my Guide ! ” 140
Thus spake I—on he moved—and o'er the wold,
Toilsome and savage, after him I stride.

THE THIRD CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—The poets arrive at the portal of hell. Its inscription. They pass through it and find a people in great confusion, who had lived careless of good or evil. With them the angels who neither rebelled against, nor aided the Almighty. Arriving at the river Acheron, Charon, the ferryman of Hell, refuses to put Dante across, until rebuked by Virgil. On reaching the gloomy realm, Dante falls to the ground insensible.

“**T**HRO’ me the way into the realm of dole;
Thro’ me the way of endless anguish prove;
Thro’ me the way to ev’ry damned soul.
Justice did first my lofty builder move;
I by the Might Divine was built of yore, 5
By highest Wisdom, by primeval Love.¹
No thing had been created theretofore,
If not eternal—I eternal too;
Ye who pass thro’ leave hope for evermore.”
These were the words inscribed in darkest hue 10
That I beheld above a lofty gate,
Then said: “The sense is hard of that I view.”
He answer’d me in wisdom consummate:
“Now must thou leave behind thee ev’ry fear,
And ev’ry low mistrust exterminate. 15

¹ The three persons of the Holy Trinity.

The place whereof I spake to thee is here,
Where thou shalt see the souls to anguish doom'd,
Whom blest Intelligence² comes never near."
Stretching his hand to mine, my Lord resum'd
His way with cheerful visage, and consol'd 20
He led me in where sights mysterious loom'd
There sobs, and wails, and loud lamentings roll'd
In echoes; there no star could pierce the cloud,
Whereat, at first,³ my tears flow'd uncontroll'd.
In divers tongues, in horrid accents loud, 25
Outcries of anguish, shrieks which anger hurls,
Hoarse voices deep, hands smiting in the crowd,
Made a tumultuous uproar, such as whirls
For ever in that dark, unchanging air,
Like sand when in the whirlwind it upcurls. 30
Then I, whose brows with terror girded were,
Exclaim'd: "Oh! Master, what is this I hear?
What are these spirits overborne with care?"
And he replied: "This suffering severe
Holds the sad souls who pass'd without reproof, 35
Without esteem, on earth their dull career.
Mingled with whom, of their disgrace the proof,
Are the vile angels who did not rebel,
Nor kept their faith to God, but stood aloof.

² Intelligence here means God.

³ When Dante discovered who the sufferers were he ceased to weep for them.

Its beauty not to lessen, Heav'n did expel, 40
Nor Hell receiv'd them in her womb obscure,
Lest guiltier ones should glory how these fell."
Then said I : " Master, say what pangs endure
These wretches, that so loudly they lament ?"
And he : " Few words will answer ; they are sure 45
That ev'ry hope of death for them is spent ;
So foul is their blind life that they surpass
All else in envy, and in discontent.
The world lets not their fame survive, alas !
Them justice and compassion both despise ; 50
Let us not speak of them, but look and pass."
And as I gaz'd, a banner met my eyes,
Advancing, whirling with impetuous speed,
As though 't were scornful of repose it flies.
And close, behold ! so long a train succeed 55
Of parted souls, that I had never thought
So vast a multitude to death decreed.
And some of these I knew, and as I sought
Amongst them, I descried the spirit base⁴
On whom his fears that great refusal wrought. 60

⁴ Pietro Morone, a hermit of great renown for sanctity, was chosen Pope in 1294, and assumed the name of Celestine V., but before the end of the year was induced by threats or cajolery to abdicate. He was soon afterwards seized in his retirement by his successor Boniface VIII., and died in prison at Fumone.

Then understood I, then could clearly trace,
That this before me was the guilty host,
Hateful alike to Hell and heav'nly grace.
Wretches, theirs was not life that they had lost!
Naked were all, fretted, and sorely stung, 65
For round them gather'd wasps and hornets most.
And from their visages the blood outsprung,
And, mingling with their tears, dropp'd to their feet,
Where loathsome worms lap it with greedy tongue.
And when I turn'd me objects new to meet, 70
I saw a crowd^b on a great river's bank,
Wherefore I said: "Oh! Master, I would weet,
If Thou permit, why crowd those shades in rank
So dense to pass yon river pressing on?
Or so I deem it thro' the vapours dank." 75
But he replied: "All shall be clear anon,
When for a while our journey we shall cease
Beside that mournful river, Acheron."
With downcast eyes, abash'd and ill at ease,
Fearing that my discourse had vex'd my guide, 80
Till we had reach'd the stream I held my peace.
When soon I saw a vessel tow'rds us glide,
Where was an old man, white with ancient hair,
"Woe unto you, accursed souls!" he cried.

^b The spirits of the guilty, hastening to cross the Acheron into hell.

“ Give up all hope to see the upper air ; 85
I come to yonder bank to take you o’er,
To endless darkness—heat and frost are there!
But thou, live spirit, standing on this shore,
Go, get thee hence, these souls departed leave !”
Seeing I tarried still, he spoke once more : 90
“ Perchance some other road or port may give
Thee passage over, here thou shalt not go ;
Some lighter vessel must thy form receive.”
“ Nay, Charon,” said my Master, “ chafe not so ;
Thus it is will’d where all is possible 95
When it is will’d ; seek thou no more to know.”
Upon the shaggy cheeks swift silence fell
Of that old pilot of the livid lake,
But round his eyes flames circled terrible.
But when they heard the savage words he spake, 100
Those weary naked spirits clash’d their jaws,
And quick the colour did their cheeks forsake,
Blaspheming God, their parents, and the cause
Why they were born, mankind, the place, time, seed
Of their existence, and their being’s laws. 105
Then all together, while the big tears speed
Down ev’ry face, they near’d the awful strand,
Which waits for him who fears not God indeed.
With blazing eyes, and beck’ning with his hand,
The fiendish Charon bids them to his boat ; 110
His paddle strikes the laggards of the band.

As one by one the leaves in autumn float
Slowly to earth, till to the ground below
The branches yield their treasures, did I note
The evil seed of Adam swiftly go, 115
And at his signal one by one descend
That shore, like falcons at the call they know.
Thus o'er the dusky tide the spirits wend ;
But long ere they the other bank can reach,
On this side, lo! another throng attend. 120
"My son," such was my courteous Master's speech,
"All those who perish in the wrath of God,
From ev'ry land must meet upon this beach.
And eager are they all to cross the flood,
For Divine Justice spurs on ev'ry shade, 125
That fear becomes desire. Yet never trod
A sinless soul this shore, or passage made.
Therefore, if Charon did of thee complain,
Thou know'st for certain why he did upbraid."
When this was finish'd, all the gloomy plain 130
Was shaken so, that as my mind reverts,
The sweat of terror bathes my form again.
Forth from the tearful earth a whirlwind starts—
One lightning-flash of vivid crimson deep—
Then ev'ry sense my failing frame deserts, 135
And prone I fell, like one seized on by sleep. . .

NOTE.—The edition of the *Divine Comedy*, with the Notes of Costa and Bianchi, published by Le Monnier, 1849, contains a brief

description of Hell, which I translate literally, as giving, I think, the clearest notion of the structure with which I am acquainted :—

‘The Hell of Dante is a vast abyss of conical shape, its inverted apex being at the centre of the earth, the surface* of which encloses it. It is divided into nine principal circles, far apart from each other, each bounded by two others (one above, one below), so that each forms as it were an amphitheatre. Upon the bounding mounds of these circles, which, between their two limits, embrace an enormous space, the condemned spirits dwell. The poets, ever veering to the left hand, traverse a part of each circle; until they have seen what sinners inhabit it, and the fashion of their punishment, and have recognised some of the shades. Then they turn towards the centre, and having found the rocky descent, they pass by it to the next circle. In this way they journey to the lowest point, except in some particular cases, which are commented upon as they occur.’

* The central point of this bounding surface is Jerusalem.

THE FOURTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—Being roused by thunder Dante finds himself on the brink of the first circle, called Limbo, where those abide who lived virtuously before and after the birth of our Lord, but were never baptized. CHRIST's descent into Hell, whence He liberates many. Homer and other great poets welcome Virgil's return. After seeing many shadows of the most glorious and pure, Virgil leads Dante towards the second circle.

RESOUNDING thunder the deep slumber broke
That was within my head, and with a bound,
Like one arous'd by violence, I woke.
And moving slow my rested eye around,
Soon as erect, the spot I keenly scann'd 5
To know the place I stood in. Then I found
Myself in truth upon the narrow strand
Encompassing the melancholy vale,
And ceaseless sorrow¹ thunder'd thro' the land.
In the deep, dark abyss such mists prevail 10
That, tho' I strain'd my eyesight thro' the gloom,
Nought saw I in the bottom of the dale.

¹ This is the thunder which awoke him.

"Let us descend into yon sightless womb,"

My Poet thus address'd me all amort,

"I will be first, thou after me shalt come." 15

But I, who saw him changing in such sort,

Replied: "How thitherward shall I aspire.

When Thou art fearful, Thou, my sole support
In all my doubts?" He said: "The torments dire

Of those beneath have painted on my face 20

Pity; in thee 'tis terror they inspire.

But on! the road is long that we must trace."

And thus he enter'd, thus he led me there

To the first sphere that doth the abyss embrace.

Therein there was no wailing of despair, 25

So far as hearing went, except the sighs,

Which shake for ever that eternal air.

They sprang from grief alone, no agonies .

Tormented those vast crowds innumerable;

From men, from women, and from babes they rise. 30

My kindly Master spake: "Why art thou thus

Careless to ask what souls are those we see?

Yet know, ere we proceed, iniquitous

These never were; tho' merits in them be,

'Tis not sufficient, baptism was not theirs, 35

The portal of the faith believed by thee.

Because before the Gospel CHRIST declares,

Falsely they worshipp'd God in their career,

And he who speaks to thee this fortune shares.

For this alone, from other sin quite clear, 40
Yet are we lost, our only suffering still
To live in longing,² which no hope may cheer."
And as I heard with grief my heart did thrill,
For many men I knew of highest worth
'Midst that suspended race who Limbo fill. 45
"Oh tell me, Master, Thou who ledd'st me forth,
Tell me," I cried, that I might cease suspense
Of the faith that conquers error upon earth,
"Has none by his own merit issued hence,
Or by another's, to the blissful state?" 50
And he, who understood my hidden sense,
Replied: "When I was new to this estate,
Came One³ in might and majesty array'd,
And with the sign of vict'ry laureate.
Hence He withdrew our earliest parent's shade, 55
Abel, his son; hence Noah did He bring,
And Moses, who observ'd the laws he made.
The patriarch Abraham, David the king,
Jacob, his sire, his children hence He bore,
Rachel, for whom he knew such suffering. 60

² It is no wonder if sorrow thundered through the land from those condemned to be ever desiring, knowing they have no hope of attaining their object.

³ The Saviour. His descent after the crucifixion is again referred to, c. xxi., 112.

He summon'd, and made blissful many more;
And I would teach thee that to blessedness
No mortal spirit had attain'd before."
Tho' all the while conversing, nathelless
We halted not, but threaded still the wood, 65
The wood I mean of spirits numberless.
And now, not far away, the summit⁴ stood
Behind us, when I saw a sudden blaze,
Round which the hemisphere of dark did brood.
Still it was distant when it met my gaze, 70
Yet not so far but I discern'd in part
An honourable race⁵ that throng'd its ways.
"Oh! Thou who ever honour'st science, art,
Who are these spirits in such honour plac'd?
Why from the others are they set apart?" 75
And he: "The fame with which their names are grac'd
Resounding thro' thy world Heav'n doth revere,
And thus advances them mid the abas'd."
Meanwhile, a mighty voice broke on mine ear:
"Honour ye all the most exalted bard; 80
He had gone forth, once more his shade is here!"
When that the voice was still, nor further heard,
Four shadows huge came trooping o'er the sward,
With looks nor glad, nor sorrowful. "Regard

⁴ The summit of the bank encircling Limbo. As the poets descended, they, of course, left the summit behind them.

⁵ The unbaptized who lived in virtue.

The one whose hand beareth a mighty sword," 85
 Began my gentle Master; "see, he strides
 Before the other three, their sovran lord.
 'Tis Homer's spirit, king of all besides;
 Horace, the satirist, behind him see,
 Ovid the third, and lastly Lucan glides. 90
 Because they all in that fair name⁶ agree
 Which even now that voice in me did greet,
 They come, and they do well, to honour me."
 Around him thus I saw the grand school meet
 Of that lord paramount in noble song, 95
 Who soars above them all, an eagle fleet.⁷
 Talk'd they together for a while not long,
 Then turn'd towards me with a friendly sign,
 Whereat he gently smiled, my Master strong.
 But greater honours yet than these were mine; 100
 For they received me in their brotherhood,
 The sixth in order of that learned line.
 Then onward went we where the beacon stood,
 Discussing subjects now best left untold,
 As to discuss them there was wise and good. 105

⁶ The name of poet. The voice which greets Virgil's return (v. 80) is the collected voices of the other four poets.

⁷ I think this must mean Homer, although Rossetti says Virgil, and certainly the selection of the four chiefest poets is strange enough to render his view in itself not improbable.

We came beneath a castle⁸ tow'ring bold;
Seven times high walls encircled it, I ween,
Beneath, for its defence, a fair stream roll'd
We cross'd, as if this hardest ground had been;
Thro' seven gates led me my masters wise, 110
Unto a meadow ever fresh and green.
There many were with earnest, solemn eyes,
Whose ev'ry look their majesty express'd;
Rare but in sweetest tones their voices rise.
Then on one side withdrawing found we rest 115
In a light space before us, open, large,
Where all the shadows might be seen the best.
There, standing on the green-enamell'd marge,
Were shown to me the mighty shades of yore,
Whose sight doth still my self-respect enlarge. 120
I saw Electra⁹ there with many more;
Hector I recognis'd, Anchises' son,
And hawk-eyed Cæsar,¹ who his armour wore.
I saw Camilla and the Amazon
Opposite, then Latinus and his child,² 125
He seated next to her, his only one.

⁸ The castle is explained to be Virtue, the seven walls the seven sciences, the stream education, the meadow glory.

⁹ Daughter of Atlas, and mother by Zeus of Dardanus, founder of Troy.

¹ Wearing his armour as the founder of the imperial (i. e. war-like) power of Rome, as opposed to the ecclesiastical.

² Lavinia, who married Æneas. The Amazon is Penthesilea, slain by Achilles.

Brutus, by whom the Tarquins were exil'd,
 Cornelia, Marcia, Julia,³ chaste Lucrece;
 And all alone stood Saladin the wild
 Raising my eyelids yet a little piece, 130
 Lo! where the lord supreme of wisdom⁴ sate
 'Midst the philosophers of hoary Greece.
 All give him honour, him all venerate;
 Plato and Socrates, the noble pair,
 Next him, before all others, keep their state. 135
 Then he⁵ whose world sprang up by chance was there;
 The mournful sage,⁶ Thales, Diogenes,
 There Anaxagoras and Zeno were.
 Amongst them I beheld Empedocles,
 Then Orpheus and the simple-gatherer;⁷ 140
 Seneca, Livy, Tully, Romans these.
 With Ptolemy,⁸ Euclid geometer,
 Hippocrates and Galen, Avvicen,⁹
 Averroës,¹ the wondrous commenter.

³ Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi. Marcia, wife of Cato Uticensis. Julia, daughter of Cæsar, and wife of Pompey the Great.

⁴ Aristotle.

⁵ Democritus of Abdera.—The verse is an allusion to his theory.

⁶ Heraclitus of Ephesus.

⁷ Dioscorides, who flourished in Cilicia, in the reign of Nero.

⁸ The author of the system called the Ptolemæan.

⁹ An Arabian physician, called also Ebn Sinah; born in 980.

¹ Also an Arabian, called Ebn Roschd, who in the twelfth century translated Aristotle into Arabic, and annotated it throughout.

Nor can I tell who came within my ken ; 145

For the stupendous theme pursues me so,
That words fall short of what I witness'd then.

Our band of six to two was minish'd now ;

A diff'rent way my Master leads me on

From that calm air to one where tempests blow, 150

And soon I reach a place where light is none.

THE FIFTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—The poets find Minos seated in judgment at the entrance of the second circle, in which a terrible whirlwind carries the souls before it, through a dense and dark atmosphere. These are the victims of their own lust. Many renowned shadows are here shown to Dante, but his attention is particularly attracted by two who cling together.—‘The story of Rimini.’—Dante swoons with pity.

FROM the first circle lower thus we went
 Into the second; this a smaller space,
 But heavier pangs call forth more loud lament.
 • Here Minos at the gate with grinning face
 Stands to examine crimes, and judging them 5
 Coils round himself his tail, to mark their place.
 I say, that when the soul he must condemn
 Arrives before him, all must be confess'd;
 Whilst he, of all offence decider grim,
 Reflects what part of Hell will suit it best, 10
 And coils his tail so many times about
 His body, as the sphere to be express'd.
 Ever before him stands a num'rous rout;
 Each in his turn before the judgment trod;
 Each speaks, each hears, and Hell is parcell'd out. 15
 “Oh! thou who comest to this drear abode,”
 Exclaim'd, beholding me, that Minos just,
 And from his dreadful function pause bestow'd,

“Look how thou enter, where thou placest trust;
 Let not the broad gate cheat thee here below.” 20
 “Why shout’st thou, Minos? Onward still we
 must,”

Said Virgil; “stay not what is fated so;
 Thus it is will’d where all is possible
 When it is will’d; seek thou no more to know.”¹
 And now with ev’ry grief most sensible 25
 Mine ears were fill’d, for we had gain’d the hall,
 Where on my heart the many wailings fell.
 It was a place where light doth silent fall,²
 Which roars as ’neath the tempest the vex’d main,
 When lash’d by winds from diff’rent quarters all. 30
 And Hell’s wild, never-resting hurricane
 Tears spirits with it on its headlong wing,
 And hurling, dashing, hurries them with pain.
 But when they reach the cliff³ high towering,
 There groans and lamentations, outcries wild, 35
 And blasphemies against God’s power ring.

¹ This is also Virgil’s answer to Charon, c. iii., 95.

² The same image is used in c. i., 60, to express darkness, and Samson says:

“Silent as the moon
 When she deserts the night.”

A strange use of the same idea occurs in a very recent passage of a very different author. In *Bleak House*, No. 18, which is not a week old when I write, Mr. Dickens says: “Upon this wintry night it is so still, that listening to the intense silence is like looking at intense darkness.”

³ The cliff which separates this circle from the third.

For ever in this punishment exil'd,
I learn'd, were carnal sinners doom'd to mourn,
Who let their reason be by lust beguil'd.
As on their wings the starlings forth are borne, 40
When frosts approach, in large and spreading train:
So by that blast the evil souls are torn
Hither, from thence, above, below, again!
No hope is theirs to cheer their wretched fate,
Not of surcease, not e'en of 'minish'd pain. 45
As fly the cranes with chanting desolate,
Winging the air in one long-stretching line:
So I beheld these shades disconsolate
Careering on the whirlwind. "Master mine,"
Thus I address'd him, "tell me, who are those 50
Scourg'd by the swarthy air, who round us pine."
"The first who draweth near us, of whose woes
Thou seekest tidings," spake my Teacher thus,
"O'er many tongues as empress could dispose.
But so possess'd her vice libidinous, 55
That by her laws all lust became a right,⁴
To cleanse her name of stain lascivious.
Semiramis, of whom so many write,
Succeeding Ninus, for she was his wife,
Govern'd the countries in the Soldan's might. 60

⁴ Mr. Cary happily quotes Chaucer's description of Nero:

"His luster were as laws in his degree."

The other⁵ slew herself, with love o'er-rife,
Breaking the faith sworn on Sichæus' tomb;
Lo! Cleopatra of voluptuous life."
Helen I saw, the beautiful, for whom
Long years were troubled; Thetis' son⁶ was there, 65
Who at the last thro' love encounter'd doom.
Paris and Tristan,⁷ with a thousand were
My Master nam'd, and whom his fingers told,
Whom love from human life away did tear.
But as he thus to me did all unfold 70
The names of many an ancient dame and knight,
Compassion seiz'd me, scarce to be controll'd.
"Poet," I cried, "how great were my delight
To speak with those twin spirits⁸ drawing near,
Who on the whirlwind seem to be so light." 75

⁵ Dido—Upon the death of Sichæus, her first husband, she vowed at his tomb never to love again.

⁶ Achilles, and the next verse, is an allusion to his marriage with Polyxena, a daughter of Priam, with whom the Greeks were at war.

⁷ Paris, a famous knight errant. Tristan, the lover of Isotta, and slain by her husband, the King of Cornwall.

⁸ These are Francesca, daughter of Guido da Polenta, who became Lord of Ravenna in 1265, and Paolo Malatesta, to whose brother Lanciotto she was married. Francesca and Paolo were murdered by him, on his discovery of her infidelity. Dante was a friend of Guido, and it is, I believe, Mr. T. Carlyle's touching thought, that Dante may have nursed upon his knee Francesca, when still an innocent child.

“Observe,” he answer’d, “and when their career
Brings them towards us, by the love they own
Do thou implore them, they will hasten here.”

So when more near to us the shades were blown,
I lifted up my voice: “Oh! souls that weep, 80
If not forbidden, tell us why you moan.”

And like to doves, which, to their sweet nests deep
Down dropping with the fond desire of home,
Firm thro’ the air on willing pinions sweep:

So from the crowd where we saw Dido roam, 85
Thro’ the malignant air, the twain in haste
At the strong cry of love towards us come.

“Oh! gracious living⁹ creature, who hast pass’d,
Visiting all things, thro’ the murky mist,
And us who stain’d the earth with bloody waste, 90

If in the wide world’s King there did exist
Pity for us, a pray’r for thee should swell,
Because our hapless lot thou pitiest.

What thou wouldst hear, and that which thou wouldst
tell,

We shall or tell, or hear, even as it seems 95
Thy pleasure, long as hush’d this whirlwind fell.

I am a daughter of the land¹ that teems
Beside the shore, whereon the Po descends,
To find repose with his attendant streams.

⁹ I believe the word ‘animale’ of the original is adopted to express that Dante is ‘living.’

¹ Ravenna.

Love, which the tender soul soon apprehends, 100
Did soon this shade for my fair person move,
Torn from me in a mode that still offends.
By love, that from the lov'd exacteth love,
With anxious wish to please him I was caught,
Him, who thou seest will not from me rove. 105
By love to one same death we both were brought;
Caïna² waits for him who shed our blood."
Even in these words the shades their story taught.
When these unfortunates I understood,
I bent my face, nor lifted it so long, 110
That Virgil cried: "What is thy pensive mood?"
And I began to speak, with sighing strong:
"Alas! what sweet desire, what tenderness,
Has brought them to such lamentable wrong!"
Then turning round the twain I did address: 115
"Francesca," I began, "thy agonies
Move me to weep with pity and distress.
But tell me, in the time of your sweet sighs,
How, and by what, love granted you to know
The dubious hopes that in your breasts did rise." 120
And she replied: "There is no greater woe
Than to remember, in the hours of ill,
Past happiness; thy Teacher knows 't is so—

² The den of Cain, called after the first murderer. It is the first division of the last circle of Hell (c. xxxii.), and is the doom of those who betray to death their own kindred.

But if it be indeed thy earnest will

To learn the earliest root whence passion burst, 125

I'll act as one who weeps but telleth still.

We read one day for pastime both, how erst

Love had inthrall'd the youthful Lancelot;³

We were alone and no suspicion nurs'd.

But oft the tale our eyes together brought, 130

And on our cheeks the colour rose and died;

Yet we were vanquish'd by one only spot.

For as we read when the wish'd smile did glide,

How on it that enamour'd youth did pour

His kisses, he, who ne'er shall quit my side, 135

Kiss'd my warm mouth, eager, all trembling o'er—

A Pandar was the writer, and the book⁴

Which he had writ—that day we read no more.”

Whilst even thus one of the shadows spoke,

The other wept so, that, with pity's force, 140

The semblance as of death my frame o'ertook,

And on the ground I fell as falls a corse.

³ Lancelot was one of the Knights of the Round Table, and beloved of Queen Guinevere.

⁴ This verse is,

“ Galeotto fu 'l libro e chi lo scrisse;”

Galeotto, or Galahad, was the go-between in the loves of Lancelot and the Queen, and his name is used in this passage precisely as we use the name Pandar—*Troilus and Cressida*, Act iii. sc. 2, ‘Galeotto,’ however, also means a convict sent to the galleys, and the epithet in the original is therefore doubly odious.

THE SIXTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—On recovering, Dante finds himself in the third circle, in which gluttons are confined, exposed to ceaseless and loathsome rain and hail, torn by the fangs of Cerberus, and stunned by his howling. Here he meets Ciaccio, a Florentine, who foretells the alternating successes of the factions which divide Florence. Virgil and Dante then, conversing of the future state, descend by steps to the next circle, at the entrance of which they find Plutus.

WHEN that my mind return'd, which was suffus'd
With pity for those souls so near akin,¹
Whence sadness all my faculties confus'd,
New tortures and new tortur'd ones begin
To show themselves, where'er my eyes I strain, 5
Where'er I move, what place I wander in.
I am in the third circle,² that of rain
Eternal, cursed, chill, and falling slow,
Whose fashion and degree the same remain.
Large hail, discolour'd water, mix'd with snow, 10
Thro' the most darksome air precipitate;
Stinketh the very earth whereon they flow.
Here Cerberus, strange beast insatiate,
Pours from his triple throat his doggish growl
Over the souls plung'd in this noisome fate. 15

¹ Francesca and Paolo were first cousins.

² The journey has been made during Dante's swoon.

Crimson his eyes, his beard is swart and foul,
His belly wide, and on his hands fierce claws;
The rain compels the ghosts like dogs to howl,
He seizes, flays, and rends them with his jaws
Piecemeal; they rolling, wretched, godless race! 20
Baring one side, seek for the other pause.
When that big worm³ perceiv'd us, all apace
He op'd his mouths and show'd his cruel teeth;
He had no limb that shook not in its place.
My Master then stretch'd out his hands beneath, 25
And when his fists were fill'd with the foul mould,
He hurl'd it in his greedy jaws. When seeth
A baying dog the food he longs to hold,
But when he champs it ceases erst to bay,
All passion save of swallowing controll'd: 30
Such rage the loathsome visages display
Of Demon Cerberus, whose bellowings
So stun the shades that they for deafness pray.
Upon the ghosts the grievous tempest flings
To earth, we travell'd, trampling heavily 35
Those empty shapes⁴ that seem'd substantial things.
Extended on the ground beneath they lie,
But one⁵ uprose to sit where he was laid,
So soon as he beheld us passing by.

³ Cerberus. In c. xxxiv. Lucifer is also called a worm.

⁴ Gluttons.

⁵ The real name of this spirit is unknown. Both Dante and Boccaccio speak of him as Ciaccio, which means Hog.

"Thou, who art led thro' Hell," exclaim'd the shade, 40

"Say if thou know'st me still, or dost forget;

For thou, before I was unmade, wast made."

And I return'd: "The anguish thou hast met,

It may be, has withdrawn thee from my mind,

That it appears I never saw thee yet. 45

But tell me who thou art, and why confin'd

In this sad place, and in such punishment?

Some may be more, none of such loathsome kind."

He answer'd: "In thy city, where is pent

Such envy that the sack now overflows, 50

There in the life serene my days were spent.

'Hog' I was nicknam'd all the city knows;

And for the damned sin of gluttony,

These showers, as thou seest, form my woes.

In this dejection not alone am I, 55

For all around endure these very pains

For the same vice." His words ceas'd utterly.

"Oh! Hog," I answer'd, "when thy spirit plains

Such grief weighs on me that my tears gush down;

But tell me, an thou know'st, what fate remains 60

For the poor sons of that distracted town?

Is any just amongst them? prithee, tell

Wherefore such discord in their hearts is sown."

He answer'd: "After struggles long and fell

They'll come to blood; the faction from the wood⁶ 65

Shall ruthlessly its enemy expel.

⁶ The Bianchi and the Neri (the Whites and Blacks), were the

But this, before the third sun is renew'd,
 Must fall—the other shall surmount the rest
 Thro' him who tricks you with his gracious
 mood.⁷

The victor long on high shall hold his crest, 70
 Bending them to the burthen of his ire,
 Tho' they may weep with shame and grief
 oppress'd.

The just are two⁸—none heedeth their desire,
 For pride, and envy, and the greed of gain,
 Are the three sparks that set all hearts on fire.” 75
 Herewith he clos'd the melancholy strain.

“More must thou teach me,” from my lips burst
 forth,

“From further gift of speech do not refrain.

chief factions in Florence at this time. The former is here alluded to, for its leader was of the family de' Cerchi, which had recently come into the city from the forests of the Val di Sieve. Corso Donati was head of the Neri. The expulsion took place in 1302.

⁷ The meaning of this verse is much disputed, and the words 'che teste piaggia' have much difficulty. Some interpret it as above, and think the reference is to Boniface VIII., who, whilst preserving the best relations with Florence, was labouring to render his own interest paramount. Others, with Mr. Cary (who translates it,

“Of one who under shore now rests”),

refer the passage to Charles of Valois, who, it is said, was then at Rome, waiting a propitious moment for his expedition against Sicily. Alberti gives both meanings, but does not cite the passage.

⁸ It is far from agreed who the Two were; most understand Dante himself, and Guido Cavalcanti.

Where's Farinata?⁹ Tegghia?¹—men of worth!—
 Arrigo,² Rusticucci,³ Mosca⁴—where? 80
 And more who strove for noble ends on earth?
 Oh! let me see them, tell me where they are;
 Desire oppresses me to know if they
 By Hell are ban'd, or balm'd with Heaven's fare."
 Then he: "With blacker spirits far they stay; 85
 For diff'rent sins sink them in the abyss;
 Thou mayst behold them, if so deep thy way.
 When thou revisitest the world of bliss
 Recall my memory to the minds of men;⁵
 No more I speak, or answer thee than this." 90
 His fixed eyes asquint he twisted then;
 Awhile he gaz'd on me—then bow'd his head,
 And fell with it into the Blind One's den.
 "No more shall he awake," my Master said,
 "Until the angel's trumpet-blast shall sound; 95
 When comes the hostile power to judge the dead,

⁹ Farinata degli Uberti was the chief of the Ghibelline party. He is condemned for heresy, c. x., 32.

¹ Tegghiaio (which name the metre of the original also requires to be pronounced 'Tegghia') was a leader of the Guelphs, c. xvi., 41. In these two cases we have an instance of Dante's impartiality to political friend and foe alike.

² Arrigo Fifanti was engaged in the murder of Buondelmonte.

³ Jacopo Rusticucci, a nobleman of Florence, c. xvi., 44.

⁴ Mosca is condemned, c. xxviii., 106.

⁵ Till we reach the last Canto of Hell, a promise to revive the memory of a spirit is throughout the strongest inducement that Dante or Virgil can hold out to it to comply with their wishes. In c. xxxiii. it is, however, scorned.

By each his wretched tomb must then be found ;

Each shall resume his form and flesh—the doom

Eternal on his ears shall then resound.”

Thus travers'd we the mixture wearisome 100

Of spirits and the rain, with footsteps slow,

Discoursing slightly of the Life to Come.

I said: “ When doom is spoken, let me know

Will these great pangs be greater than before,

Will they be less, or will they burn as now ? ” 105

He said: “ Recall thy philosophic lore,

Which tells thee that as each more perfect grows

Evil and good alike it feeleth more.

Altho' be sure this cursed race ne'er goes

To true perfection, yet beyond that blast 110

Each shall be something greater,⁶ as he knows.”

On by a circling pathway thence we pass'd,

Discussing much I do not now reveal ;

And came to a descent by steps at last,

Where Plutus was, arch-foe to human weal. 115

⁶ A passage from St. Augustine is quoted to explain this:—
 “ Cum fiet resurrectio carnis, et bonorum gaudium majus erit, et malorum tormenta majora.” Still it appears to me that although this passage may have suggested Dante's, he means far more than that the pains of the damned shall be greater. I think he means that their knowledge and perception shall become finer and wider, and that from being advanced in intelligence, they shall feel more acutely their infamy and their degraded state. Mr. Tennyson's line will help to make my idea clearer :

“ Like a beast with lower pleasures, *like a beast with lower pains.* ”

THE SEVENTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT :—Plutus roars forth inarticulate sounds, but Virgil rebukes him, and the Poets pass to the fourth circle, which they find shared between the Avaricious and the Prodigal. The manner of their torment, which is the same for both. Virgil descants upon the vanity of Fortune's gifts. Midnight has arrived, and they descend to the fifth circle, and emerge upon the Styx, in which the spirits of the Wrathful are wounding one another. The bubbling of the lake occasioned by the sighs of the Gloomy and Ill-conditioned. The Poets arrive at the foot of a lofty tower.

“**P**APE, Satàn, aleppe!”¹ Plutus cried,
 Raising his voice in tones of hoarse lament;
 And my all-wise and ever-gentle Guide
 Consoling said: “Let not thy fears prevent
 Thee ; for whatever powers he may wage, 5
 He cannot stay thee from the rock’s descent.”
 Then turning to that lip inflam’d, my Sage
 Exclaim’d : “Thou wolf accursed! speak no more,
 Consume within thyself with all thy rage.
 Not without cause do we these deeps explore; 10
 ’Tis will’d on high where they who did rebel
 In proud adultery Michael’s vengeance bore.”

¹ These strange words are so uncertain of meaning that I have thought it best to retain them. They are generally supposed to be Plutus’s cry to his master for aid, although some have believed them to be an anagram upon the Pope.

Even as sails before the breezes swell,
 But fall collaps'd if snaps the mast in twain :
 So on the earth the ruthless monster fell. 15
 Descending thus, the fourth abyss we gain,
 Advancing further in the dismal steep,
 That doth the ill of all the world contain.
 Justice of God ! most strangely dost thou heap
 New pangs and travail, such as I perceive ! 20
 Why do our crimes bring agony so deep ?
 As on Charybdis when the waters heave,
 On that which meets it breaks each billow proud :
 Such dance as that these spirits doth aggrieve.
 More than elsewhere I saw a numerous crowd, 25
 On either hand,² and still with all their might,
 Their chests roll'd heavy weights with bawling loud.
 They dash'd together ; then in backward flight
 Each turn'd him from the other with a cry :
 'Why scatter'st thou ?'—'Why graspest thou so
 tight?' 30
 From one to the other side these spirits fly,
 Ever revolving thro' that circle dark,
 Repeating the reproachful song for aye.

² Misers and Prodigals. Their cries are given in v. 30. Their prison is circular in form, one half being allotted to each party. Along this they move to and fro, so that at each end of the course the spendthrift meets the miser, is hurled against him and rebounds upon his own semicircle to meet him again at its other end.

Each turn'd about, when he had reach'd the mark,
Thro' his half-circle to the other bourne ; 35
And I, whose heart with pity 'gan to cark,
Exclaim'd : " Now tell me, Master, wherefore mourn
These spirits ; these I see upon our left,
Were these all holy shavelings who are shorn ?"
He said : " Tho' they be many, they were reft 40
Of judgment for their former life's behoof,
Or hoarding, or expending without thrift.
Hereof their barking voice gives ample proof,
When meeting at the two points of their way,
At which opposing sins keep them aloof 45
Clerks were all those whose heads no hair display,
Popes eke and cardinals, o'er whom the most
Avarice exerts an undisputed sway."
Then I replying : " Master, in this host
Methinks I ought to recognise some few 50
Who by such infamy were smirch'd and lost."
He answer'd me : " Thy thoughts are empty too ;
The worthless life which made them erst such stocks,
'Gainst recognition darkens them anew.
For ever they shall meet with roughest shocks ; 55
These from their graves shall be resuscitate
With clutching hands, and those with shaven locks.³

³ Symbolical of their opposite vices ; the spendthrift not retaining even the hair on his head.

Badly to give and keep, of the fair state⁴

Deprives them, hurling them beneath this ban ;

I'll not embellish it with words ornate.

60

And now, my son, thou mayst perceive the span

Of Fortune's gifts, how brief and fleeting soon,

To compass which is yet the toil of man.

For all the gold that is beneath the moon,

Or ever was, could not for one of those

65

Tir'd souls procure of briefest rest the boon."

"Oh ! Master, mine," I answered, "yet expose

What Fortune is of which I hear Thee speak,

Whose grasping claws the goods of earth enclose."

Then he : "Oh ! creatures, impotent and weak,

70

What boundless ignorance your souls offends !

But now digest the sentence thou dost seek.

For He, whose wisdom ev'rything transcends,

Builted the heav'ns, and gave each part a guide,

That each part unto each its sheen extends,⁵

75

And so the light resplendent they divide ;

Thus for the brightness of the earthly seat

One general Ministrant⁶ did He provide,

⁴ Paradise.

⁵ That each part (of heaven) lends its light to the part (of earth) beneath it.

⁶ As the Almighty provided angels to guide the planets (*Par. c. xxviii.*), so Fortune is appointed by Him to rule human affairs.

To shift life's empty boons in season meet,
From tribe to tribe, from blood to blood to pass, 80
Such as no human reason can defeat.
Thus rises one, whilst falls another race,
For ever following that pow'r's behest,
Which yet is hidden, like the snake in grass.
With hers your wisdom shall in vain contest ; 85
She can foresee, decide, and carry thro'
Her sway, as theirs God's other pow'rs confess'd.
Her endless changes never truce may know ;
Necessity still urges her to speed,
For they who seek her favours are not slow. 90
Such is that power, crucified indeed
By those whose duty bids them to revere,
Who wickedly blaspheme at her instead.
But she is blessed, and she does not hear ;
And with each earliest glad-created thing 95
Exults in bliss, on-rolling in her sphere.
Let us descend to greater suffering ;
The stars, that rose as I went forth, now sink,⁷
And all forbids our longer loitering."
We cross'd the circle to the other brink, 100
Reaching a fountain⁸ welling up, which roll'd
Its waters thro' a self-constructed chink.

⁷ The Poet signifies that it is past midnight, for the stars have begun to sink.—Eighteen hours have elapsed since the commencement of the Poem.

⁸ The source of this stream is shown c. xiv., 112.

The wave was more than sombre⁹ to behold ;
 We, keeping on the murky water's strand,
 By a strange road a lower entrance hold. 105
 Here the dull waters to a lake expand
 Yclept the Stygian, where they gain the base
 Of the malign, grey rocks, that further stand.
 And whilst I halted to survey the place,
 I saw much muddy people,¹ who were nude, 110
 Plung'd in the swamp, with torture on their face.
 Not with their hands alone this multitude
 Smote one another, but with feet, chest, head,
 And others shredded by their teeth I view'd.
 "My son, thou seest," my good Master said, 115
 "The souls of those whom anger overcame ;
 And more by thee it must be credited,
 That sighing spirits dwell beneath the stream,
 Who with their sighing bubble up the flood ;
 And where thou turn'st thine eyes it is the same. 120

⁹ "L'acqua era buia molto più che *persa*."

Persa is a word which has no equivalent in English. It is, I believe, a dark and dingy blue. In old English the same word existed ; for Chaucer, in the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, says of the Doctour of Phisike :

"In sanguin and in perse he clad was alle."

In Mr. Tyrwhitt's Glossary '*perse*' is said to mean 'sky-coloured, of a bluish-grey,' which certainly does not correspond to Dante's use of it above.

¹ Those who were of such gloomy temperament that their souls were prostrated, and languid for all things. What a fine moral is contained in their chants of complaint !

‘ When in the air,’ they bellow from the mud,
 ‘ Gladden’d by sunshine, we were sad that time,
 Bearing within the fumes of evil blood ;
Now we are sadden’d in the swarthy slime.’
 And for they cannot speak in accents plain 125
 Their gullets gurgle forth this ghastly rhyme.”
Circling the loathsome marish once again,
 Between the centre and the dry we pass’d,
 Gazing on those who that foul draught must drain,
And we arriv’d beneath a tower at last. 130

THE EIGHTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—At the lighting of two beacons on the tower, responded to by another at a great distance, Phlegyas is seen speeding across the lake in a small boat, in which the poets embark. Argenti, a Florentine, is seen with many others in the water. At length they reach the dwelling of Dis, a fortified city, garrisoned by the fallen angels. Virgil confers with them in private, when suddenly they retire and close the gates against him. He foretells the quick arrival of one, who shall compel them to open them again.

CONTINUING my lay, I shall recount
That ere we reach'd the lofty tower's base,
The eyes of both did to the summit mount,
Seeing two flames new-lighted on that place,
Whilst one afar responded to the sign, 5
Almost too far for human eye to trace.
Then to that Sea of Sense¹ did I incline,
And said: "What says this one? What the reply
Of yonder flame? who is it bids them shine?"
"On the revolting wave thou mayst descry," 10
He answer'd me, "that which awaits us now,
If the marsh-vapours hinder not thine eye."

¹ Virgil.

Never did cord urge arrow from the bow,
Or arrow speed thro' rapid air so fast,
As I beheld a little vessel go. 15
And drawing nearer, thro' the waves it pass'd
Under the steering of a single guide,
Who cried: "Fell spirit, art thou come at last?"
"Ah! Phlegyas, in vain thou shoutest," cried
My Lord; "this time 'tis vain, for thou shalt have 20
Us, only while we cross the oozing tide."
As one who hears of a deception grave
Practis'd upon him, and begins to cark:
So Phlegyas gloom'd in anger by the wave.
My Master then descended to the bark, 25
And close beside him made me enter in,
Nor seem'd it loaded till I did embark.
Soon as my guide and I the shallop win,
Its ancient prow to cleave the waters, low'r
Than was its wont with others did begin. 30
And as across the dead, dull pool we scour,
One³ threw himself mud-laden in my way,
Calling: "Who art thou, here before thine hour?"

³ Phlegyas fired Apollo's temple at Delphi, and thus revenged himself for the violence the God had offered to his daughter Coronis. He is therefore placed here as ferryman to the fiery city of Dis.

³ Filippo Argenti, one of the Cavicciuli-Adimari, a family of the highest rank. He was a man of the most violent disposition, and foremost in opposing Dante's recall from exile.

I said: "Tho' I be come, I shall not stay;
But who art thou in this most filthy wise?" 35
He said: "Thou seest—one who weeps alway."
I answer'd him: "With weeping and with sighs
Tarry for evermore, accursed shade!
I know thee well, tho' in this foul disguise."
Then both his hands upon our boat he laid; 40
Thrusting him back, my Sage his grasp released,
"Go, get thee to the other dogs," he said.
My Master with his arms my form compress'd,
Kissing my face, "Indignant soul!" he cried,
"She who conceived thee, she is ever bless'd. 45
This soul on earth was fill'd with haughty pride;
No tender thought about his mem'ry stays,
So fury here his shadow doth betide.
On earth above how many a monarch sways,
Who here shall wallow hog-like in the mire, 50
Leaving behind him horrible dispraise!"
"Greatly, oh! Master mine, do I desire,"
Thus I return'd, "before this lake we leave,
To see him plung'd into the marish dire."
He answer'd me: "Before thine eyes perceive 55
The further shore, thou shalt be well content;
Such wishes unfulfill'd thou shouldst not grieve."
Soon after I beheld such punishment
Inflicted on him by the muddy crowd,
That still to God my praise and thanks are blent. 60

“Filippo⁴ Argenti 'tis,” they shouted loud;
 He with his own teeth his own body tore,
 Wild Florentine, with quaintest soul endow'd.
 We left him there, of him I tell no more;
 Now lamentation smiting on mine ear, 65
 Eager I cast my unbarr'd gaze before.
 “At length, my son, the city draweth near
 Of Dîs,” my Master said, “its num'rous rout,
 Its terror-laden citizens⁵ are here.”
 I answer'd him: “Oh! Master, without doubt 70
 In yonder vale its minarets I discern,
 Of brightest red, as tho' they issued out
 Of fire.” And he replied: “The flames eterne
 Raging within them, make them crimson-hued,
 As in this low abyss thy sight may learn.” 75
 Then soon within the ditches deep we stood
 Which here intrench the land disconsolate;
 And iron seem'd the ramparts as I view'd.
 At last we gain'd a spot, not without great
 And many windings, where the pilot roar'd 80
 To us: “Get out! here is the entrance gate.”

⁴ I must ask the reader's indulgence for what appears here, and in many passages, a redundancy of feet in my verse, and must beg him to elide one of the vowels in reading, as he would in Italian, and occasionally in English also, as:

“To *many* a youth, and *many* a maid.”—*L' Allegro*.

⁵ It has been suggested, and very tastily I think, that by the word ‘citizens,’ Dante here means the Demons whom we now meet for the first time.

Above the gates I saw a thousand pour'd
In show'rs from Heav'n,⁶ with violent gest and tone
Exclaiming: "Who is this, that hath explor'd
The kingdom of the dead, and hath not known 85
Death?" By a sign my Master did explain
His pleasure to confer with them alone.
They curb'd a little then their great disdain,
And said: "Come thou, but let him quit this place
Who with such rashness enter'd our domain. 90
Alone let him his mad career retrace.
Let him essay if he this deep can leave;
Stay thou, who ledd'st him thro' the gloomy space."
Reader, how comfortless I was, conceive,
Hearing the cursed plan their malice made, 95
That I should ne'er return I did believe.
"Oh! my dear Guide, who sev'n times by thine aid
Hast brought me safety, thou who hast alone
Drawn me from dangers that my progress staid,
"Oh!" I address'd him, "leave me not undone! 100
Our steps let both retrace, and speedily,
If 'tis denied us to press further on."
The Master spake, who thus far guided me:
"Be not afraid; none shall our journey thwart,
It is vouchsaf'd by such authority. 105
But here await me, and thy wearied heart
Comfort and feed meanwhile with hope the kind,
I will not leave thee in this nether part."

⁶ The fallen angels.

He went his way, and left me there behind,
The tender father—I in doubt remain, 110
For Yes and No were battling in my mind.
I could not hear what terms he did explain;
He tarried with them for a season brief,
Then with all speed they rush'd within again.
Our foes clos'd all the gates against my chief, 115
Upon his breast, whilst he, excluded, pac'd
Towards me with the tardy step of grief.
With downcast eyes, and from his brow effac'd
All confidence, with heavy sighs he spake:
“By whom from sorrow's mansion am I chas'd?” 120
To me: “Because thou seest me wrathful, take
No dread; in this ordeal I shall subdue,
Whate'er resistance from within they make.
This insolence of theirs is nothing new;
It was display'd at a less secret port,⁷ 125
Which still stands without locks. There didst thou
view
Above it writ the words which death import;
And now within that gate descends the slope,
Passing the circles all without escort,
The one, thro' whom this land to us shall ope.” 130

⁷ The portal of Hell. The imagining is that when CHRIST descended to release the souls (c. iv., 52,) the fallen angels closed the gate against Him, and that He thereupon hurled it back, wrenching off the locks.

THE NINTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—Dante's terror at the fallen Angels. Upon the blazing tower the Furies are seen, who clamour for the Gorgon. The whirlwind of its approach. The Angel from Heaven at length arrives, and at his stern reproof the city's gates fly open. He returns—the Poets enter, and Dante beholds a multitude of graves, heated by fire, in which Virgil explains to him heretics are entombed.

THE colour, which, when I beheld my Guide
Return, was painted on my cheek by fear,
Check'd that wherewith his own was newly dyed.
Attent he stood like one who fain would hear;
For little forward could he cast his sight 5
Thro' the thick fog and murky atmosphere.
“Now surely, surely, we shall win the fight,”
He said; “if not—One promised aid to yield—
Till that One comes how tardy is time's flight.”
Full well could I perceive how he conceal'd 10
The earlier thought with that which after went;
So much it differ'd from the erst reveal'd.
Yet natheless his words my fears augment,
Because the broken words that from him fell
I forc'd to graver import than he meant. 15
“Into the bottom of this mournful shell
Descends there any from that first degree,
Whose only woe is hope-bereft to dwell?”

This question I address'd to him, and he
Replied: "'Tis rarely one of us hath made 20
The journey undertaken now by me.
Yet is it true that once I was convey'd
By fierce Erictho's¹ magic to this spot,
Who to its form could summon ev'ry shade.
Lately my flesh was nude of me, I wot, 25
When she compell'd me enter, to allure
One from the circle of Iscariot.
His is the lowest place, the most obscure,
Farthest from heaven, the all-encompassing;
I know the road, therefore rest thou secure. 30
This stagnant pool, whence putrid stench spring,
Hems the sad city round, where none may gain
Entrance without their ire encountering."
Yet more he spake, which is not in my brain,
Because my eyes did ev'ry sense attract 35
To that high tower, whose summit blaz'd amain,
Where, in a moment rising up erect,
The hellish Furies, blood-imbrued, we found,
And women they appear'd in form and act.
Hydras of brightest green about them wound, 40
Their hair was horned snakes and vipers keen,
With these were their ferocious temples bound.

¹ Erictho, a sorceress of Thessaly, whom Sextus Pompey employed to invoke a spirit from Hell to foretell the event of the war between his father and Cæsar. I am not aware how Virgil could have been concerned in this, but, c. xii., 34, he again refers to his descent.

Then he, who knew the handmaids of the queen,²
 Of tears and anguish, which may never cease,
 Said : "The three fierce Erinnyes there are seen. 45
 Thine eye upon the left Megæra sees ;
 Alecto on the right bemoans distress'd ;
 Tisiphone between." He held his peace.
 Each with her talons ever tore her breast,
 Smiting herself, and shouting in such tone, 50
 That terror-stricken to my Bard I press'd :
 "Medusa ! come—we'll change him into stone ;
 Not ill did we revenge the fierce attack
 On Theseus !" ³ so they shouted looking down.
 "Now keep thine eyelids closed and turn thy back, 55
 For if thou shouldst behold the Gorgon rise,
 Thy hope is none to gain the upper track !"
 And having spoken thus, my Master wise
 Turn'd me himself, nor would he trust to mine,
 But with his own hands also clos'd mine eyes. 60
 Oh ! ye, that have your intellects divine
 Healthy and whole, unto the veiled lore
 Beneath my verse mysterious, incline !
 For now above the turbid waves a roar
 Of sound came rushing on us, full of dread, 65
 And at its coming trembled either shore.

² Proserpine, consort of Pluto.

³ Theseus descended into Hell to carry away Proserpine, but he was fastened to a rock, and his comrade Pirithous was given over to be devoured by Cerberus. They were delivered by Hercules, when he dragged Cerberus to earth. See v. 99.

Not other is the whirlwind's current bred,
Impetuous by opposing heats intense,
Which smites the forest, and ungoverned
Dashes the branches, rends and whirls them thence, 70
And scattering the herdsman and the brute,
Sweeps proudly on like sand in clouds immense.
Loosing my eyes, "Direct thy most acute
Vision," he said, "towards that ancient foam,⁴
Where thickest lie the mists I bid thee view 't." 75
Like frogs which swiftly thro' the waters roam,
Flying apart before the hostile snake,
Till in a heap upon the shore they come :
I saw above a thousand caitiffs take
To flight, before the quick approach of One,⁵ 80
Who travers'd with dry feet the Stygian lake.
Removing from his face the vapours dun,
Often he wav'd before him his left hand,
Appearing wearied by that toil alone.
Full well I knew him sent from Heaven ; and 85
I turn'd towards my Lord, whose signs implied
That I should bow to him, and silent stand.
Alas ! how full he seem'd of noble pride !
He reach'd the gate, and with a tiny rod
Without impediment he op'd it wide. 90

⁴ The consequence of the recent hurricane.

⁵ An angel sent from Heaven.

"Oh ! race despis'd, oh ! outcasts ye of God,
 Why dwells such insolence within you still ?"
 He cried as he the horrid threshold trod ;
 "Why do you ever kick against that Will,
 Whose aim at last you cannot mutilate, 95
 Which oft already hath increas'd your ill ?
 What profits it to butt against your fate ?
 You should recall that stripp'd is still the hair
 From throat and chin of Cerberus irate !"
 Back by that loathsome way did he repair, 100
 Speaking no word to us, but with the look
 Of one beset and gnaw'd with other care
 Than for the man before him ; but we took
 Our onward feet towards the land enclos'd,
 In safety, thro' the holy words he spoke. 105
 We enter'd ; then no war our path oppos'd ;
 And I, whose earnest wish it was to view
 The state which such a citadel compos'd,
 Soon as I gain'd the entrance, round it threw
 Mine eyes, and saw far-spread on ev'ry side 110
 A land replete with grief and torments new.
 As near by Arles,⁶ where stagnant is Rhone's tide,
 As in Quarnaro's Bay,⁷ (where Pola lies,)
 Bathing the bounds which Italy divide,

⁶ Arles, in Provence. A short distance below the town, the Rhone spreads into the Etang de Valeares.

⁷ The Bay of Quarnaro separates Istria from Croatia. Pola is in Istria.

The graves make all the soil to fall and rise : 115
So here it swell'd with graves on ev'ry part,
Save this in bitterness that far outvies.
For thick amongst the graves the flames did start,
By which all underwent a heat as strong
As iron needeth for the founder's art. 120
Above them all their coverings were hung,
Thence issued forth a moaning sound so hard
As prov'd them souls in misery and wrong.
I said: " Who are these people, oh ! my Bard,
Who, buried thus within yon vaulted dome, 125
In woeful sighing make their voices heard ?"
" Arch-heretics of ev'ry sect, with whom
Lie all their proselytes," my Lord return'd,
" And fuller than thou deemest is each tomb.
Here lies for ever like with like⁸ inurn'd; 130
More and less heated are the monuments."
Then onward, soon as to the right he turn'd,
We pass'd thro' torments and high battlements.

⁸ Many different sects are buried here, but the votaries of each sect lie together in one tomb.

THE TENTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—Virgil explains to Dante who are buried here. A voice stops Dante: it is Farinata degli Uberti. Their conversation is interrupted by Cavalcante, who inquires anxiously for his son Guido. After replying, the conversation with Farinata is continued, and he foretells Dante's exile. The Poets proceed, and Virgil consoles him with the assurance, that Beatrice shall hereafter prophecy to him the course of his life.

NOW journeys onward by a narrow track,
 The circle's walls and sepulchres beside,
 My Master, and I follow close his back.
 "Oh! Virtue most sublime, who hast," I cried,
 "Thro' these abandon'd spheres my steps controll'd, 5
 Now speak, that my desires be satisfied.
 The dwellers whom these sepulchres enfold
 May they be seen of us? Each covering
 Is lifted high, and none seems guard to hold."
 "All shall be clos'd," so spake he answering, 10
 "When from Jehoshaphat¹ they come again
 And thence the frames they left above shall bring.

¹ "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the Valley of Jehoshaphat."—Joel iii. 2.

This space before us for their graves obtain
With Epicurus his disciples, who
Hold that the spirit with the flesh is slain. 15
Within shall satisfaction soon ensue
To that desire, which thy demand display'd;
And to the wish² thou keepest silent too."
"Kind Lord, of too much speech was I afraid,
Therefore alone I hid my heart's desire; 20
By Thee this precept was upon me laid."³
"Oh! Tuscan, traversing the town of fire
Alive, whose words such honesty express'd,
I beg thee, tarry in this region dire.
Thy language truly makes thee manifest 25
A native of the land, renown'd and dear,
Which I perchance did once too much molest."
Sudden these words resounded on mine ear
From one of the arch'd tombs, whereon I plac'd
Myself more closely by my Guide in fear. 30
But he exclaim'd: "What dost thou? turn in haste!
'Tis Farinata⁴ who has risen there,
And thou canst see him upward from the waist."

² The wish to converse with those ensepulchred.

³ c. iii., 80.

⁴ Of the noble family degl' Uberti. He led the Ghibellines at the battle of Mont' Aperti, in 1260, and after this victory he alone opposed the destruction of Florence. The battle of the Arbia, referred to v. 86, is the same. See c. vi., 79.

Already on his visage mine did glare ;
With forehead and with breast he boldly rose, 35
As tho' even Hell his great contempt did share.
My Master's hand, alert and daring, throws
Me to him, 'mid the tombs ; he spake alone :
" Now plainly let thy words thy sense disclose."
The spirit gaz'd on me an instant, soon 40
As I had reach'd his grave, and thus did say
Disdainfully : " What ancestry dost own ?"
Then I, who was desirous to obey,
Nothing concealing, soon related all ;
Casting his eyebrows up a little way, 45
He said : " To me and mine inimical
Thine ancestors my party so did spurn,
That twice⁵ I scatter'd them before my fall."
" Tho' they were banish'd twice did they return,"
I said, " first time and second equally, 50
An art *thy* friends could never surely learn."
Another shade⁶ uncover'd I could see.
Beside the former, upward from its chin,
Methinks that it had risen on its knee.

⁵ First in 1248, when the Emperor, Frederick II., was fomenting the internal discords of Florence ; secondly, after the battle of Mont' Aperti. Dante's family were Guelphs, as he was himself in the earlier part of his life. But in 1300, the Guelphs had expelled the Ghibellines.

⁶ This is the soul of Cavalcante Cavalcanti, the father of Guido, Dante's dearest friend, supposed to be alluded to in c. vi., 73.

It look'd around me, as its wish had been 55
To ascertain if any soul stood near,
But when expectance ceased to intervene,⁷
Weeping it said: "If through this dungeon drear
Thou go'st by majesty of intellect,
Where is my son? oh! why not with thee here?" 60
"Alone I journey not; he does direct
My course," I said, "who waits me there below;
Him Guido held perchance in disrespect."⁸
His converse and the fashion of his woe
Read me the name already of that sprite, 65
Therefore did my reply so fully flow.
"How saidst thou—*held*? Lives he not still?" upright
Suddenly rising, he began to rave:
"Breaks not upon his eyes the lovely light?"
But he perceiving that, before I gave 70
My answer, I had made some little pause,
Fell back, nor reappear'd above the grave.

⁷ He is expecting to see his son. Verse 60 indicates the great intimacy that existed between Guido and Dante. The love of Cavalcante for his son is wonderfully suggested in the few following verses.

⁸ On this passage Rossetti confidently relies to support his theory of the signification of Dante's choice of Virgil as his guide. As poet and as philosopher, he argues, it would have been impossible to despise him; but Cavalcante was a Guelph, and hence his disrespect for the Poet of the Roman Empire arose.

That other noble soul who was the cause
Why I had tarried erst, turns not his head,
Nor changes aspect, nor his form withdraws. 75
“And if they badly learnt that art,” he said,
And at his former word his speech resum’d,
“That causes me more torment than this bed.
But yet ere fifty times shall be relum’d
The visage of the dame⁹ who rules this place, 80
To learn how hard that art thyself art doom’d.
So mayest thou to earth thy steps retrace,
As thou shalt answer me, why thus irate
This people’s ev’ry law is to my race.”
I said: “The carnage and the havoc great 85
Whence Arbia the crimson colour wore,
Within our council such decrees create.”
Thereat he shook his head and sighing sore,
“There I was not alone,” did he commence,
“Nor without grounds had mov’d with many more. 90
But there I was alone, when ’twas the sense
Of all to level Florence with the ground,
And stood in sight of all her sole defence.”

⁹ The Moon, who, as Proserpine, reigned in Hades. The fifty full moons from the time of the poem will bring us to May, 1304, previously to which the White Faction, which had been banished in 1302, and with which Dante was then allied, attempted to return to Florence, but failed. The attempt was repeated in July, 1304, and again failed.

“So may at last thy race in peace abound,”
I cried, “even as for me thy speech unties 95
The knot, wherewith my brain is tangled round.
What Time shall bring to pass your eye descries
Methinks beforehand, if I hear aright;
But for the present it seems otherwise.”¹
“We see, like men with a defective sight,” 100
He answer’d, “things which from us are afar,
To this extent the Highest grants His light.
But when they near approach, or when they are,
Our sense is vain, nor of your human state
Aught know we, save as passers-by declare. 105
Thou canst perceive, then, that exanimate
Our knowledge from that hour shall ever cease,
When on the Future² shall be closed the gate.”
Then sorrow for my fault my heart did seize,
And I exclaim’d: “Inform the soul who fell, 110
That with the quick his Guido’s days increase.
And if but now I did delay to tell,
Cause him to know I did so in the thought,
Whose great mistake thou hast resolved so well.”

¹ The shadows know the future and the past, but not the present. This Dante observes from the allusion to the Arbia, and the prophecy of his exile by Farinata, and from Cavalcanti’s inquiry as to the continued existence of his son.

² When there shall be no hereafter—at the Last Judgment.

My Lord recall'd me now, but I besought, 115
 And therefore press'd the shade more urgently
 To tell to me what spirits shared his lot.
 He spake: "Above a thousand with me lie;
 Within the second Frederick³ is pent;
 THE Cardinal⁴ is here, but I pass by 120
 All else in silence." Then my steps I bent,
 For he withdrew, towards the bard of eld,
 Turning in thought those words of sad portent.⁵
 He mov'd away, and whilst our course we held
 He spake to me: "Why art thou so perplex'd?" 125
 I satisfying him his doubts dispell'd.

³ Frederick II., crowned Emperor of Germany in 1215, being then in his nineteenth year. He was grandson of Frederick I., Barbarossa; he was the most distinguished prince of his time, of great learning, of refined tastes, of most chivalric spirit, but his morals were lax, and his religion nought. His contests with the papal power were incessant, and in 1227 he was excommunicated by Gregory IX. In the following year he proceeded on a crusade, and in May crowned himself King of Jerusalem in that city. In 1239 he was again excommunicated. Gregory died in 1241, and was succeeded by Innocent IV., who continued the ban, but trembling at Frederick's power, fled to Lyons in 1244. The Emperor was engaged in an expedition in Northern Italy, when disease struck him, and he died in 1250.

⁴ Ottaviano degli Ubaldini, who was called *par excellence*, THE Cardinal. Offended with the Emperor, he abandoned his cause, saying that if such a thing as the soul really existed, he had lost his for the Ghibellines. He died in 1272, having been a cardinal nearly thirty years.

⁵ The prophecy of Farinata, v. 79.

“But treasure in thy soul the things that vex’d
Thy hearing;” then his finger did he raise,
And wise commanded: “Listen to the next;
For soon as thou shalt stand within the rays 130
Of her, whose lovely eyes to all extend,
From her thou’lt learn the journey of thy days.”⁶
Sudden towards the left his footsteps wend,
We seek the middle space and quit the wall,
Taking a path which in a vale doth end, 135
The loathsome stench whereof spreads over all.

⁶ Beatrice. It is, however, Cacciaguida who predicts to Dante his coming life. *Par.* c. xvii.

THE ELEVENTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—After seeing one more sepulchre, the Poets tarry awhile to inure themselves to the foul odours of the valley beneath them, and Virgil avails himself of this delay to explain the divisions they have yet to visit, and the different kinds of sin punished in them. Six circles have now been traversed, and only three remain. The dawn is again at hand, and they proceed towards the seventh circle.

UPON a lofty bank that overhangs,
Form'd by huge shatter'd rocks encompassing,
We came, and saw beneath more savage pangs;
And here by reason of the vomiting
Of filthy stinks, that from the bottom roll, 5
We both withdrew behind the covering
Of a vast tomb, whereon I saw a scroll,
Inscrib'd: "Pope Anastasius here I guard,
Lur'd by Photinus¹ from the truthful goal."
"Here our descent must we awhile retard, 10
To inure in part our senses to the dense,
Foul breath, which then we need no more regard."

¹ Photinus was Deacon of Thessalonica, and had such influence over Anastasius I., Emperor of the East, A.D. 492—518, as to lead him into the heresies which he himself had adopted. Some, relying upon the text, insist that a pope is meant, but differ whether it is the second or the fourth of that name.

So spake my Lord. Then I: "Some recompence
 Do Thou discover, that the time bereft
 Pass not unus'd." He said: "Thou seest my sense. 15
 My son, within the circuit of yon clift,"
 He said, "three lesser spheres² of punishment
 Range sphere in sphere, like those which thou hast
 left.
 These too are fill'd with souls malevolent;
 But that hereafter the mere view suffice, 20
 Mark how and why in durance they are pent.
 The end of ev'ry heav'n-detested vice
 Is injury; and every such end
 By force or fraud to others' woe gives rise.
 But frauds, being man's *own* sin,³ the more offend 25
 The Lord, and therefore lower are convey'd
 The fraudulent, whom heavier woes attend.
 The violent alone fill the first grade;
 But as against three persons force is shown,
 'Tis in three circlets built and sep'rate made. 30

² Smaller than those already traversed. When it is necessary to distinguish these from the larger divisions I have used the word 'circlet,' as being near the Italian 'cerchietti.'

"Then take repose till Hesperus display'd
 His golden circlet in the western shade."

POPE'S *Odyssey*.

³ That is to say, not belonging to the lower animals.

To God, one's neighbour, and oneself, alone
 Can force be used; I mean, as thou shalt see
 Fully set forth, them and the things they own.
 For death and grievous wounds by force may be
 Inflicted on a neighbour; and the flames, 35
 Ruin, and theft may waste his property.
 But those who kill, or strike with evil aims,
 Robbers and thieves, each from his different course,
 The earliest circlet for its torment claims.
 Man 'gainst himself may raise the hand of force, 40
 And 'gainst his goods; the second then receives,
 To mourn in unavailing, deep remorse,
 Whoever of the earth himself bereaves,
 Who wastes or recks not of his faculties,
 And where he should be happy, only grieves.⁴ 45
 Against the Godhead force in him may rise,
 Who spurns at Nature and her tenderness,
 Or God blasphemes, or in his heart denies.
 Therefore that lesser circlet doth impress
 Its seal on Sodom and Cahors,⁵ and those 50
 Contemning God within the heart's recess.

⁴ What a grand moral is in this verse! It is the spirit in which Satan walked the garden of Eden:

"The fiend
 Saw undelighted all delight."

Par. Lost, iv. 285.

⁵ In Guienne, famous in the thirteenth century for usurers.

But fraud, whose sting in ev'ry conscience goes,⁶
Against a trusting friend may be employ'd,
Or those who never confidence repose.

But by this latter method is destroy'd 55

Only that bond of love which Nature forms;
Therefore there nestle in the second void

Hypocrisy, and flattery, and charms,

Falsehood, and simony, and thieving base,

Pandaring, swindling, and such filth in swarms. 60

The former mode doth both that love displace

Which Nature makes, and that therewith con-
joint,

Wherefrom arises special trust and grace.

Wherefore that smallest sphere, the central point

Of all the universe, where Dîs doth sit, 65

To prey on traitors doth the Lord appoint.”⁷

I answer'd: “ Master, with distinctness fit

Thy words proceed, and skilfully mark out

The gulf itself, and those who dwell in it.

⁶ David said, “in his haste: All men are liars;” Virgil deliberately says, all are dishonest.

⁷ Thus the three remaining circles are allotted: the seventh to those who injure God, their neighbour, or themselves by force; the eighth, to those guilty of treachery to persons to whom they are bound by no tie but the goodwill which should be amongst men; the ninth, to those who are treacherous to their country, to friends, to kinsmen, to benefactors.

But tell me: those the whirlwinds drive about, 70
Those of the fat lake, those the rains distress,
Those clashing ever with opposing shout,⁸
Why in the city red with fire's excess
Are they not punish'd, if the Lord is wroth?
If not, why elsewhere have they wretchedness?" 75
He answer'd me: "Why wanders from the path
Beyond what is its wont thy intellect?
Tell me what other aim thy reason hath.
The very words canst thou not recollect,
Wherewith thy moralist⁹ at length reviews 80
Three dispositions Heaven will reject?
Incontinence, mad brutishness, abuse
Of human reason; but to incontinence
God's wrath is less, and lesser blame accrues.
Revolving then that sentence in thy sense, 85
Recalling too what souls those are who pine
And there without are doom'd to penitence,
Thou wilt see clearly why these shades malign
Are separate from those, and why more light
The crushing torments of the wrath Divine." 90

⁸ The criminals alluded to in these three verses are, the incontinent, c. v.; the wrathful, c. vii., 109; the glutton, c. vi.; and the spendthrifts and misers, c. vii., 25.

⁹ Aristotle; "In the matter of morals three things there are to be shunned: maliciousness, incontinence, brutishness."

"Oh! Sun,¹ who healest all perverted sight,
 Such is my joy when thou my doubts dost solve,
 That doubt, no less than knowledge, is delight;
 But yet a moment thitherward revolve,"
 I spake, "where usury, as thou hast told, 95
 Offends GOD's mercy, and that knot resolve."
 "Philosophy," he answer'd, "will unfold
 To one attent, that in a single part
 Alone, great Nature ne'er her course doth hold
 From GOD's intelligence, and from his art; 100
 And if thou earnestly thy 'Physics' scan,
 Its early pages shall to thee impart
 That human art follows, as best it can,
 Nature, as pupils must their guides obey;
 Grandchild to GOD's is thus the art of man.² 105
 And from these two, if thou shalt well survey
 The earliest Genesis,³ the human race
 Must gain its living, and pursue its way.
 But usurers who different pathways trace,
 Therein do Nature for herself disdain, 110
 And for her follower; for elsewhere they place

¹ Virgil is here called the sun, and seems likened to the sun in c. i. :

"Which leadeth man aright in ev'ry strait."

² Nature and her power sprang from GOD—and man sprang from Nature.

³ "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," Gen. iii. 19, a law which usurers, who seek to advance themselves by other means, violate.

Their hopes. But onwards! follow me again;
On the horizon, lo! the Fishes glance,⁴
Over the north-west stretches all the wain,
Beyond must we into the deep advance.”

115

⁴ As the sun is in Aries, and the constellation Pisces (which is the next in the Zodiac) is glittering on the eastern horizon, it is, I believe, indicated that it is within two hours of dawn. The Great Bear, over the north-west, is another indication of that hour. Twenty-two hours have thus elapsed since the sunrise in c. i.

THE TWELFTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—At the brink of the precipice, down which their course lies, the Poets find the Minotaur. Virgil directs his anger against himself, and Dante, meanwhile, gains the descent. In the first circlet those who by violence have injured mankind stand in a river of boiling blood. Upon an open space, bounding the stream, the Centaurs course to and fro, darting arrows at any criminal who protrudes too far above the surface. Their chief, Chiron, upon Virgil's request, directs Nessus to bear them across the river; he, on their passage, points out many notorious tyrants and robbers on the main roads.

NOW where we journey'd to descend, the brink
 Was Alpine-like, and one¹ that on it lay
 Was such, that from it ev'ry eye would shrink.
 As is the ruin, where the soil gave way,
 Shatt'ring the flank of Adige, this side Trent,² 5
 By earthquake's shock, or by some failing stay,
 And from the mountain's summit, whence 'twas rent,
 Hurl'd the rock headlong down into the glade,
 And thus to one above some passage lent:
 So down that precipice the way was made; 10
 But where asunder the ravine was torn,
 The infamy of Crete at length was laid,

¹ The Minotaur, offspring of Pasiphaë.

² "This side Trent" means, of course, on the Italian side. The spot has not been determined on.

That of the simulated cow was born ;
He gnaw'd himself when on his sight we broke,
Like one by inward rage distraught and worn. 15
"Perchance," my sapient Master loudly spoke,
"Thou thinkest still the Duke of Athens³ near,
Who dealt thee upon earth the mortal stroke.
Avaunt ! thou monster, for thou need'st not fear
That this one comes train'd by thy sister's arts ; 20
Only to view your torments is he here."
And as a bull, wild rushing, forward starts,
The instant he receives the fatal wound,
Yet cannot on, but hither, thither darts :
Thus I beheld the Minotaur rebound, 25
Whilst cried my Master : "Haste thee to the pass !
While he is raging, to the lower ground !"
So we descended o'er the scatter'd mass
Of rocks, that often shook beneath my tread,
A weight that did their wonted load⁴ surpass. 30
I walk'd in reverie : "Thy thoughts," he said,
"Perchance are of the precipice watch'd o'er
By the brute fury I have vanquished.
But I would have thee know, that when of yore
I first descended to this nether Hell, 35
Not then had toppled down the mountain hoar.

³ Theseus, to whom Ariadne, daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë, gave the clue which led him safely through the labyrinth, where he slew the Minotaur.

⁴ The 'wonted load' being that of spirits. See v. 81, and c. viii. 27.

But it is certain, if I mark it well,
A little only ere He⁵ came, who brought
From Dîs those spoils which in the first sphere dwell,
The deep and fetid vale so shook, methought 40
That then throughout the universal world,
The love was felt, whereby, as some have taught,⁶
The world was often into chaos hurl'd ;
And instant this old rock, which tow'ring stood,
On this and ev'ry part was headlong whirl'd. 45
But fix thine eyes below, the stream of blood
Is drawing near us, in the which must boil
The violent against his neighbour's good."
Oh! blind cupidity, oh! foolish toil,
That in the brief life spurs us onward so, 50
To plunge us, and for ever, in this coil!
I saw an ample fosse curv'd like a bow,
So that it compass'd all the level space,
As theretofore my learned Guide did show ;
Whereon 'twixt flood and cliff, upon a trace, 55
The Centaurs arm'd with arrows were dispers'd,
As upon earth they sallied to the chase.

⁵ The Saviour. See c. iv., 52.

⁶ An opinion attributed to Empedocles of Sicily, that the world sprang from the discord of the elements, and that when concord prevailed amongst them each resolved itself into its primal condition, and chaos ensued. This is the first division of the seventh circle, containing those who injured mankind by violence.

Beholding us descend they halted erst:

Then from amongst the troop I saw three wend,

With bows and arrows they had chosen first. 60

One shouted from afar: "Ye who descend

The precipice, what torture do you seek?

Speak where you stand, or else my bow I bend."

My Master said: "The answer we shall speak

Shall be to Chiron, when we nearer stand; 65

Thy hasty soul did ever evil wreak.

'Tis Nessus," and on me he laid his hand,

"Who died with Dejanira's love possess'd,

But erst the vengeance for his death had plann'd

He in the midst who gazes on his breast 70

Is mighty Chiron, once Achilles' nurse;

The third is Pholus, ever wrathfullest."

Around the fosse thousands on thousands course,

Aiming their darts at ev'ry soul, who rear'd

Him higher from the blood than was his curse. 75

To these fleet-footed savages we near'd,

When Chiron took a shaft, and quick did raise

Up to his cheek with the notch'd end his beard;

Exposing thus his huge mouth to the gaze,

He shouted to his comrades: "Do you weet, 80

That hinder one shakes all whereon he stays?

Not such the usage of a dead man's feet."

My gentle Lord, who to his breast had gone,

Just at the point where the two natures meet,

Replied: "Indeed he lives, and thus alone 85
Must thro' my aid the murky vale descry;
Necessity, not pleasure, leads him on.
One⁷ left the hallelujahs of the sky,
Intrusting this new duty to my love;
No robber he, no ruffian-soul am I. 90
But by that influence, thro' which I move
My footsteps thro' this dark and savage lair,
Grant of thy squadron one whom we may prove,
Who may direct us to the ford, and bear
Him safely thro' it, mounted on his croup; 95
He is no spirit who can walk the air."
Tow'rds his right pap did ancient Chiron stoop,
Addressing Nessus: "Back, and lead them; ward,
If ye encounter, ev'ry other troop."
Thence by the shore, under that trusty guard, 100
Of the red, boiling stream we travell'd now,
Where from the boil'd ones loudest shrieks were heard.
I saw some plung'd within it to the brow;
"Tyrants are these," the mighty Centaur cries,
"Who robbery and bloodshed did allow. 105
Here they bewail their cursed infamies;
See Alexander; Dionysius there,
Who caus'd Sicilia years of agonies.

⁷ Beatrice.

And yonder forehead with the blackest hair
Is Ezzolino;⁸ he beyond again 110
Obizzo da Esti⁹ with the tresses fair,
Who upon earth was by his step-son slain."
Then to the Poet I turn'd me and he spake:
"Let him be first, I second will remain."
The Centaur further on some pause did make 115
Before a race, who even from the throat
Appear'd to issue from the seething lake;
And bidding us one lonely shadow note,
He said: "The heart still worshipp'd on the Thames
That spirit¹ even in God's own bosom smote." 120
Others I saw protruding from the streams
Their heads, and all their chests, and well I knew
Many of those so thrusting forth their frames.
For ever shallower the blood-stream grew,
That all except the feet the blood did leave; 125
There thro' the fosse might we our course pursue.

⁸ Ezzolino da Romano, the ruthless tyrant of Padua, murdered in 1259.

⁹ Marquis of Ferrara, suffocated in 1293 by his own son, whom the Poet here calls his step-son. He was an ally of Charles of Anjou, and contributed greatly to the overthrow of the imperial party.

¹ 'That spirit,' Guy de Montfort, who, in 1270, murdered in the church ('God's own bosom') of Viterbo, Henry, son of Richard, a younger brother of Henry III. of England.

" Even as on this side thou canst perceive
 The boiling stream becoming less and less,"
 The Centaur said, " I wish thee to believe
 That ever deeper doth the bottom press, 130
 Till on the other side the waves return,
 Where tyranny must groan in wretchedness.
 For there chastiseth Heaven's justice stern
 That Attila, who was the scourge of earth,
 Pyrrhus and Sextus Pompey,² and eterne 135
 Milks of their tears, by the fierce heat press'd forth;
 Riniero Pazzo and Corneto's lord,³
 Who on the highways to such crimes gave birth."
 Then turning back Nessus repass'd the ford.

² I think the 'Sesto' of the original must mean Sextus, the son of Pompey the Great, who long kept up a naval war against the second Triumvirate. This seems a strange place for the punishment of the

" false Sextus
 Who wrought the deed of shame;"

although some annotators think that the son of Tarquin the Proud is meant.

³ Two notorious chiefs of banditti in Dante's own time.

THE THIRTEENTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—Now they enter a dense and savage wood, which is the second circlet, and Virgil soon informs Dante that a guilty soul is confined in the trunk of every tree, and preyed upon by the Harpies. These are sinners who committed violence against themselves. Pier delle Vigne is first revealed to them, and he describes their doom. A Florentine, who had committed suicide, expounds to them the causes of the miseries of Florence.

ERE Nessus to the other shore had cross'd
 We both towards a savage forest drew,
 Thro' which the trace of ev'ry path was lost.
 No verdant leaves, but all of dusky hue,
 No graceful boughs, but tangled and in knots, 5
 No kindly fruits, but thorns envenom'd grew.
 Nature no stems so rough and dense allots
 Unto the savage beasts, that hold in hate
 Cécina's¹ and Corneto's well-till'd plots.
 The brutal Harpies here their nests create, 10
 Who drove the Trojans from the Strophades²
 With sad announcement of their coming fate.

¹ Cécina is a river, Corneto a town, somewhat south of Leghorn.

² Islands in the Ionian Sea, where Celæno, one of the Harpies, foretold famine to Æneas.

Human the face and neck, wide wings have these,
Feet arm'd with talons, feather'd bellies vast,
They make lament on the mysterious trees. 15

And my good Master : " Ere we yet have pass'd,
Know in the second circlet³ now we stand,"
Thus he began, " and shall, till in the last
We enter on the field of horrid sand.

Therefore observe, casting thine eyes around, 20
What to my words shall faith in thee command."
On ev'ry side I heard lament resound,
Yet none who made lament my vision caught,
Wherefore I halted in amazement bound.

I think my Master thought that I had thought⁴ 25
The many voices issued from the brake,
From some who dreading us concealment sought.
" Therefore, if thou shouldst tear," my Master spake,
" One little scion from a single bough,
Thou shalt perceive how much thy thoughts mis-
take." 30

A little way my hand extending now,
I pull'd a branchlet of a hawthorn down,
When the trunk shouted : " Wherefore pluckest
thou?"

³ The abode of the Violent against themselves.

⁴ In the original the same word is thrice repeated :

" Io credo ch' ei credette ch' io credesse."

Then trickled forth a stream of blood dark-brown,
 "Why dost thou wound me?" thus it cried again; 35
 "Is pity to thy spirit all unknown?
 Now are we chang'd to trees who once were men;
 But if the souls of vipers we had been,
 Thy hand might have been gentler, even then."
 Even as in the flame a firebrand green 40
 Burns at one end, and at the other cracks,
 Hissing with wind, which thro' it rushes keen:
 So too that shiver'd branch at once unpacks⁵
 Its words and blood—the branchlet from my hold
 Falls, and I stand like one whom terror racks. 45
 "If he could have believ'd this thing of old,"
 Replied my Master, "oh! thou wounded shade,
 Which in my verse he did alone behold,⁶
 Never on thee would he his hand have laid;
 He could not credit it, so to this deed 50
 I urg'd him, whence I am myself dismay'd.
 But tell him who thou art, that in the stead
 Of all amends he may revive thy fame
 Above, where to return he is decreed."

5

 "——— unpack my heart with words."
Hamlet.

⁵ An allusion, as is v. 21, to the story of Polydorus, told in the third book of the *Æneid*. The myrtle upon his grave dropped blood when *Æneas* plucked a branch.

The trunk said : "The sweet promise you proclaim 55
 Lures me from silence ; may it not displease
 If I be trapp'd to talk—I am the same⁷
 Who whilom in the world possess'd both keys
 Of Fred'rick's heart, and so I turn'd them round,
 Locking, unlocking it, with so much ease, 60
 That no one else in its recess was found ;
 But soon I lost my blood and being's springs
 Thro' the warm zeal I bore my post renown'd.
 The harlot Envy⁸ who for ever flings
 Round Cæsar's halls her eyes with lewdness rife, 65
 The death and plague-spot of the courts of kings,
 Inflam'd the minds of all against my life ;
 And the inflam'd inflam'd my Prince august,
 That my glad honours turn'd to doleful strife.
 My spirit, brimm'd with anger and disgust, 70
 Thinking by death to free myself from scorn,
 Against my just self made me all unjust.

⁷ Piero delle Vigne, of Capua, chancellor of Frederick II., was at one time omnipotent in his master's councils, till other courtiers accused him of intriguing with the pope. His eyes were put out by the Emperor's command, and Piero dashed out his brains against the wall of his prison. But it is also asserted that he really attempted to poison the Emperor.

⁸ Some think that Dante means the Court of Rome under the name of envy. Mr. Cary again quotes Chaucer very happily :

"Envie is lavender of the court alway,
 For she ne parteth neither night ne day
 Out of the house of Cæsar, thus saith Dant."

Leg. of Good Women, 358.

I swear by the new roots of this my thorn
That ever my allegiance I did save
To him, so worthy honour to have borne! 75
If either journey back to earth, I crave
Him to restore my mem'ry, which lies low,
Prostrate beneath the blow that envy gave."
After brief pause, my Bard address'd me so:
"Now he is silent, let no moment fly, 80
Speak, question him, if thou wouldst further know."
"Nay, do Thou question him," was my reply,
"Of what Thou deem'st may render me content;
My pity's such that powerless am I."
Therefore he spake: "So be this mortal bent 85
Freely to grant thee all thy pray'r contain'd,
As thou art prone, oh! spirit dungeon-pent,
To tell us truly how thy soul is chain'd
In this gnarl'd stem, and, if thou knowest, tell
If any thence his freedom hath regain'd." 90
With heavy breathings did the strong bole swell,
The wind soon chang'd itself into a voice:
"In a few words shall you be answer'd well.
When the ferocious soul the form destroys
And quits it, by itself asunder torn, 95
To this pit Minos dooms it. Here no choice
Of station hath it; to this wood 'tis borne,
And in that spot, wherever fortune throws,
There it shoots upward like a blade of corn.

A sapling and a savage tree it grows; 100
The Harpies preying on its foliage new
Create its woes, and outlet for its woes.
We too shall seek our own, as others do,
But not that therewithal we be re-clad;
None shall regain what first away he threw. 105
But we shall drag them hither; in this sad
Forest must then our carcasses be strung,
Each on the trunk where he such grief hath had."
But still upon the tree attent we hung,
Believing he would tell us something more, 110
When we were startled by a sound that rung,
Even as the huntsman who perceives the boar
And all the chase approach him at his post,
Who hears the branches cranch, the wild beasts roar.
Behold two rushing from the luckless coast, 115
Naked and wounded, rapidly they fled;
Crushing the fan-like branches came each ghost.
"Haste, haste to me, oh! Death," the former⁹ said;
The other¹ seem'd impatient of delay,
And shouted at him: "Lano, never sped 120

⁹ Lano of Sienna, a Guelph. He ruined himself in debauchery and riot, and at Pieve del Toppo, in 1280, was with the Siennese, who were vanquished by the people of Arezzo. He refused to save himself.

¹ 'The other,' is Jacopo di San Andrea, a Paduan, who having squandered his property destroyed himself. It is narrated of him that he set fire to a whole village which belonged to him, that he

Thy legs so fast from Toppo's fatal fray!"

Then, for perchance no breath might he retain,

A bush and he became one group straightway.

Behind them now the forest swarm'd amain

With blackest mastiff bitches, fleet and lean, 125

Like greyhounds that have broken from their chain.

On him who now was crouching with their keen

Fangs seizing, they did rend him limb from limb,

And bore away the mangled parts, I ween.

My Guardian took my hand, and led by him 130

I near'd the thicket, which in vain complaint

Was moaning, thro' its gashes bleeding grim,

Crying: "To use me, Jacopo of Saint

Andrea, for thy screen, where is the good?

For thy corrupt life how am I attaint?" 135

My Master spake, when he before it stood:

"Say who thou wast, who puffest with thy breath

Thro' many a bruise thy sad discourse and blood."

"Ye spirits, who arrive," the thicket saith,

"In time to witness the foul butchery, 140

That from me all my foliage ravisheth,

Collect my leaves again beneath my tree;

I was amongst that city's² children, who

Chang'd for the Baptist their first Lord, which he

might enjoy the sight of a great conflagration. The bush in which he seeks shelter is supposed to be Rocco de' Mozzi, a gentleman of Florence.

² Florence, whose earliest patron was Mars, who, in indignation at being displaced, involved Florence in endless strife, and would

For ever with his art shall make them rue ; 145
And were it not that, where the Arno's pass'd,
Some vestiges of him you yet may view,
They who re-set its fair foundations fast,
Where Attila once left a dying flame,
Had spent their toil but fruitlessly at last. 150
For me my house a gallows-tree became."

have destroyed it altogether, had there not been left upon the bridge across the Arno some remains of the statue raised in his honour. These remains were supposed to be connected with the very existence of Florence, but in 1337 the bridge itself was carried away by a flood.

THE FOURTEENTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—The third division of the seventh circle is a plain of scorched and barren sand, on which flakes of flame fall for ever. The criminals here, and their endeavours to alleviate their agonies, described. Capaneus, one of the Seven against Thebes. The Poets gain the shore of an angry torrent, the source and nature of which Virgil explains to Dante.

LOVE for the country of my birth prevail'd
 On me, so I collected and restor'd
 The scatter'd leaves to him whose hoarse voice fail'd.
 Thence having all things to the end explor'd,
 We reach'd the limits of those circlets twain, 5
 And witness'd judgment's terrible award.
 But the new objects clearly to explain,
 I say a barren, untill'd plain we found,
 That might no plant upon its face retain.
 The mournful forest is a garland round 10
 About it, as the fosse is to the wood,¹
 And there we halted on the very bound.
 A space with thick and arid sand bestrew'd,
 Nor was its semblance other as we near'd
 Than that where once the feet of Cato stood.² 15

¹ Each enclosing the other, so that they get less and less.

² The Lybian desert, whither Cato of Utica withdrew.

Vengeance of God! how much shouldst thou be fear'd
By ev'ry one perusing here display'd,
The things which plainly to mine eyes appear'd.
I many flocks of naked souls³ survey'd,
Weeping were all in piteous disgrace, 20
And for them various laws methought were made.
Supine lay stretch'd on earth a num'rous race,
Another squatted low with bodies bent,
Others were running with unceasing pace.
Most num'rous those who hither, thither went; 25
Fewer were those tormented lying low,
But looser were their tongues to make lament.
Throughout that sand with downward motion slow
Rain'd on them ever broaden'd flakes of fire,
As falls, when winds are lull'd, the Alpine snow. 30
As in the sultry India, he whose sire
Was Ammon, saw upon his host descend
Flames, which fell, even to the earth, entire;
And therefore did to all his troops commend
To trample earth, because a task more light 35
It seem'd to quench them ere the flames could blend:
Thus fall these heats eternal, and ignite
The very sands, (even as tinder may
Burn 'neath the flint,) and double torture's might.

³ The violent against God, against Nature, and against Art, or human intelligence.

Hither and thither was the ceaseless play 40
Of wretched hands, and ever in unrest
They shook the freshly-scatter'd heat away.
Then I began: "Oh! Lord, who vanquishest
All things we meet, except the Demons grim,
Who at that entrance-gate against us press'd, 45
Who is yon shade⁴ distorted, huge of limb,
Who in his scorn seems not to heed the flame,
Nor does the rain appear to torture him?"
But soon as to the shade perception came
That even from himself my question sprung, 50
He cried: "In life and death I am the same!
Tho' Jove exhaust his smith,⁵ and anger-stung
Snatch from him the sharp thunderbolt, whereby
In my last moments I was downward flung;
Tho' he exhaust the rest alternately 55
Deep in the grimed forge of Mongibell,
And should 'Good Vulcan, help me! help me!' cry,
As upon Phlegra's battle-field befell,
Nor tho' his shafts with all his strength he throws,
No joyous vengeance shall his triumph swell!" 60

⁴ Capaneus, a native of Argos, who, when he joined the expedition against Thebes, swore he would take the city in spite of Zeus, who killed him with his thunderbolt.

⁵ Vulcan, whose forge was in Mongibello, or Etna. 'The rest' are the Cyclops, the assistants of Vulcan. Phlegra in Thessaly was the site of the great battle between Gods and Titans. The former were sorely pressed, but Hercules rescued them, and won the fight.

Then in high tones my Master's voice arose,
Higher than I had heard him, as he cried:
"Oh! Capaneus, still heavier are thy throes
In that exists untam'd thy haughty pride;
No sentence save thy fury uncontroll'd 65
Could for thy fury fitting pangs provide."
Turning to me with gentler lip: "Behold,
One of the seven monarchs, who, I deem,
Beleaguer'd Thebes, who held, and seems to hold
God in contempt, and low in his esteem; 70
His scornful soul is, as I said indeed,
The decoration which may best beseem
A breast like his. Now follow, and take heed
To keep thy feet from where the hot sand glares,
But ever by the forest's skirts proceed." 75
Silent we journeyed to a spot where tears
Impetuous from the wood a slender rill,
Whose scarlet colour raises yet my hairs.
As flows the brook from Bulicame,⁶ till
The sinners frail have taken each her share, 80
So downward thro' the sand these waters trill.
Its bed, the surface of both banks, and where
Their sides go sloping down, are hewn of stone;
Therefore I knew the crossing-place was there.

⁶ The name of a pool of hot mineral water, at Viterbo, near which was a place of ill fame.

“Beyond all other objects to thee shown 85
 Since first we enter’d by the portal dark,⁷
 Whereof the threshold is denied to none,
 No single thing so worthy of remark
 As is this stream, hath yet perceiv’d thy sight,
 Which o’er itself quells ev’ry burning spark.” 90
 These were my Master’s words, which did incite
 Me to entreat him furnish the repast,
 For which his words had furnish’d appetite.
 “In middle ocean lies a country waste,
 And Crete its name,” therewith my Sage began, 95
 “Under whose monarch⁸ all the world was chaste.
 There stands a hill, once glad with streams that ran
 And groves that burgeon’d there, Ida yclept;
 Now, like a thing forbid, ’tis shunn’d of man.
 As trusty cradle when her infant slept 100
 Rhea chose it, and the better to protect
 The boy, she caus’d loud shoutings when he wept.
 Within the hill a giant shape⁹ erect
 On Damietta turns his shoulders old;
 Rome like a mirror doth his face reflect. 105

⁷ The Gate of Hell, c. iii.

⁸ “Solitary Saturn.” The world was “chaste,” for it was free from any notion of impurity:

“——in Saturn’s reign

Such mixture was not held a stain.”—*Il Penseroso*.

⁹ The idea of this giant is clearly taken from the Book of Daniel, c. ii. It is supposed by some to mean Time; by some Christianity.

His head is fashion'd of refined gold,
And purest silver are the arms and chest,
Thence to the fork all brazen is the mould.
Downwards of welded iron is the rest,
Except that his right foot is baked clay, 110
Where, more than on the left, his weight is press'd.
All parts except the golden head display
A gaping cleft, wherefrom the tear-drops creep,
Which blending thro' the cavern force their way.
Down to this circlet o'er the rocks they leap, 115
And form Styx, Acheron, and Phlegethon,
Then downwards by this narrow conduit leap

Dante has chosen Crete, because it was there that time began. The figure looks to Rome, as the seat of true religion, and turns its back upon Egypt as the stronghold of idolatry. This is the solution of Lombardi. But to others it has seemed, as it does to me, that Dante's giant has much the same meaning as the Prophet's:—*i.e.*, the monarchical form of government, which deteriorates little by little as the refined gold of the head is changed into the baked clay of the foot. Crete was the home of the Gods in an age of purity; its back is towards Egypt as the cradle of science and government, from which the rule has passed away; but Rome, at which it gazes and in which its form is reflected, is the most perfect and worthy state, and draws the eyes of all towards it. For though Dante detested and opposed Rome and its system, I cannot think that he ever abandoned it, or believed that other than the most brilliant destiny awaited it. See his eloquent and tender digression upon its state in *Purg. c. vi., 76.* It will of course be noted, that all parts of the figure, except pure monarchy (the golden head), are distilling tears of agony, which form the hideous streams of Hell.

Till there where lower chasm existeth none
They form Cocytus;¹ of that stagnant mere
I do not tell, for thou shalt see 't anon." 120
Then I address'd him: "If the streamlet here
Derive its waters from an earthly bed,
Why does it first so low as this appear?"
"Thou know'st the place is round," my Master said,
"Tho' veering left the path be weary now, 125
And tow'rds the central deep we still have sped,
Thou hast not visited all things below;
So if this path some sights unwonted shows,
No marvel should appear upon thy brow."
I spake again: "Say, Lord, where Lethe flows, 130
And Phlegethon; of one Thou speakest not,
The other say'st Thou from this show'r arose."
"In all thy questions I am pleas'd, God wot!
But yet the boiling of the scarlet wave²
Of this at least might have resolv'd the knot. 135
Thou shalt see Lethe, tho' beyond this grave;³
Thither when penitence all sin doth purge
Each spirit hastens in its lymph to lave.

¹ In the centre of the Universe is the seat of Lucifer himself, and there we shall find Cocytus, stagnant because nothing lower exists for it to flow into.

² This implies that the stream is itself Phlegethon, which word is derived from $\Phi\lambda\epsilon\gamma\omega$, to burn.

³ Lethe is forgetfulness, which cannot be in Hell. We find it, therefore, above Purgatory and before Paradise.

But from the wood 'tis time that we emerge;
Take heed to follow close," anew he saith; 140
"An unscorch'd pathway trends along the verge,
And o'er the banks is quench'd all noxious breath."⁴

⁴ See v. 90.

THE FIFTEENTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—The Poets proceed along one of the banks, and soon meet a troop of sinners who are walking upon the plain of sand. One of these is Dante's preceptor, Brunetto Latini, whom Dante at once recognises. Their conversation occupies the remainder of the Canto, and in the course of it Brunetto foretells in what reverence the name of Dante will in after time be held. He then points out some of his chief fellow-sufferers.

FORWARD on one of those hard banks we came;
 But here the river's fumes, whence shadows fell,
 Preserve the banks and water from the flame.
 As from Cadsandt¹ to Bruges, dreading the swell
 Of onward seas, the Fleming's skill upthrows 5
 The guardian dam the billows to repel;
 And as the Paduans where the Brenta flows
 To shield their towns and castles raise the mound,
 Ere Chiarentana² feel the summer-glows:
 These in such fashion rise above the ground; 10
 But never master, be he who he would,
 To rear their like in height or breadth was found.

¹ The original says, "Tra Guzzante e Bruggia." The former is said to be a little town of Flanders. Mr. Cary translates "'twixt Ghent and Bruges," but this can hardly be, considering the inland position of the former. Alberti gives Gand as the Italian form of Ghent. A very recent prose translation in French renders it Cadsandt, which I have adopted.

² A mountain near Trent in the Tyrol, where the Brenta rises.

So far already had we left the wood
That had I turn'd to look behind me, yet
I could not have discover'd where it stood, 15
When now a company³ of souls we met
Keeping along the bank beneath, who soon
Eyed us intently, as when sun is set
Men eye each other 'neath the crescent moon;
Such looks from knitted brows at us they threw 20
As at his needle some old tailor-loon.
But I being thus eyed over by the crew,
Was known of one⁴ who on my garment caught
By the hem, exclaiming: "Ah! what marvel new!"
Then I, when tow'rds me thus his arm he raught, 25
Fasten'd my gaze upon his broiled face,
So that his shrivell'd aspect hinder'd not
That full resemblance intellect could trace,
And bending to his face my own face down,
I cried: "You, Sêr Brunetto, in this place?" 30
He answer'd: "Oh! be not displeas'd, my son,
If Brunetto Latini should retreat
With thee awhile, and let his troop pass on."

³ Persons who have been guilty of crimes against Nature.

⁴ This is the spirit of Brunetto Latini, who was Chancellor of Florence, and Dante's preceptor in rhetoric and philosophy. He was born early in the thirteenth century, and died shortly before its close. Dante esteemed him highly, and throughout this conversation addresses him as "voi—you." And yet he does not hesitate to punish him for the most revolting offence of which he believes him guilty.

"This would I rather earnestly entreat;
Awhile I'll sit with you if you command, 35
And he with whom I journey deem it meet."
"Oh! son, if any rest amid this band
One instant, for a hundred years to come,
When flames scourge hottest he must lie unfann'd.
Therefore proceed; not from thy skirts I roam; 40
But after will I to my troop repair,
That journies wailing its eternal doom."
To quit the beaten track I did not dare
For level ground with him,⁵ so bow'd alway
My head, like one who walks with rev'rent air. 45
Then he began: "Before the latter day
What destiny or hap brings thee below,
And who is he who sheweth thee the way?"
"In the calm life above," I answer'd so,
"In a deep valley I had miss'd the track, 50
Before my days did yet their fulness know;⁶
To it but yester-morn I turn'd my back;
He, as I thence was turning, met my gaze,
Now homewards by this path he leads me back."

⁵ Dante is upon the bank; Brunetto on the sand below.

⁶ It is supposed from this passage that Dante means to refer his first going astray in the wood to a time shortly after the death of Beatrice, which happened in 1290, when Dante was twenty-five years of age, and that his vision begins only when he perceived that he was lost. I see no ground for giving an extraordinary meaning to the words.

“Follow,”⁷ he answer’d me, “thy planet’s rays, 55
And in a glorious haven thou shalt ride,
If well I judg’d thee in my fairer days.
If in such early youth I had not died,
Beholding Heaven towards thee thus benign,
What comfort for thy toils would I provide. 60
But that ungrateful populace malign,
That long ago pour’d down from Fiesole,⁸
That bears the flavour yet of hill and mine;
For thy good deeds shall be thine enemy;
With ample reason! Never should her fruit 65
Produce amidst sour crabs the sweet fig-tree.⁹
That they are blinded¹ is earth’s ancient bruit,
The greedy, envious, and haughty crowd!
Take heed to purge thyself of such repute.
For thee thy fate reserves a name so proud, 70
That hunger for thee shall prevail among
Both factions; be i’ the grass no goat allow’d.

⁷ In this prophecy of Dante we must observe that self-consciousness which seems always to accompany very high genius.

⁸ The first settlers in Florence came from Fiesole or Fesulæ, an ancient town about three leagues from Florence, in the direction of the Apennines.

⁹ It will be observed how constantly Latini uses proverbial expressions.

¹ It is generally said that the Florentines were called “blind,” because, when the Pisans in 1117 offered them in return for some service their choice of two bronze gates, or two porphyry columns, they chose the latter, though injured by fire.

Let by the beasts of Fiesole be flung
The litter of themselves—the flower heed
They touch not, if such flourish in the dung, 75
From which may live again the sacred seed
Of Rome's true sons, who sojourn'd in the land
When it became the nest of evil deed."
"If all could be fulfill'd that I demand,"
I answer'd to him, "never should you cow'r 80
In agony, by human nature bann'd.
Before me ever, now I feel in pow'r,
Your placid image, fatherlike and dear,
When from your precepts, even hour by hour,
How man becomes eternal grew more clear; 85
And whilst I live the gratitude I hoard
Shall evermore upon my tongue appear.
What of my life you tell me I record,
And will expound it with more matter² still
To her, if I should reach her, for whom stor'd 90
I guard it; only this would I instil:
That I, because no evil conscience racks,
Am arm'd for Fortune, be she what she will!
Mine ear not wholly such foreboding lacks,
Wherefore let Fortune whirl her giddy wheel 95
As is her pleasure, and the boor his axe."

² This verse and verse 94, refer to Farinata's prophecy, c. x., 79.

At me my Master did a brief glance steal,
He spake, and turn'd meanwhile his left cheek round :
“ He listens best, who marks it for his weal.”
Not therefore to my converse set I bound 100
With Sêr Brunetto ; but I did exhort
Him to declare his fellows most renown'd.
“ 'Tis well,” he said, “ of some to have report,
Of others better to forbear research,
And for so long a story time were short. 105
But know in brief all here were of the Church,
Men of great learning, of renowned soul,
Whom upon earth one common vice did smirch.
Priscian³ must with that mournful people prowl ;
Francis d' Accorso⁴ too, and thou mayst see, 110
If thou hast longing for a scab so foul,
The one,⁵ who by the slave of slavery
Transferr'd to Bacchiglion' from Arno's stream,
Left there the nerves he us'd so shamelessly.
More would I tell, but it may not beseem 115
That I speak more, or further with thee stray,
For there I see the sand exhale fresh steam,

³ Priscian, the grammarian, born at Cæsarea, was appointed Professor at Constantinople, about the year 525, in the reign of Justinian.

⁴ A celebrated Florentine jurist, who died in 1229.

⁵ Andrea de' Mozzi, Bishop of Florence, translated by Pope Nicholas III. to the see of Vicenza, through which city the Bacchiglione flows.

And comes a troop with whom I must not stay
To thee my "Treasure"⁶ I commend, where
I yet survive; no other boon I pray."

12

He turn'd away and fled, as we have seen
Some o'er Verona's pleasant country run
For the green mantle,⁷ and of such had been
Methinks the winning not the losing one.

⁶ This was the title of an allegorical poem, written by Latini; is in French, but only known in an Italian version.

⁷ These races were held upon the first Sunday in Lent. The spirit hastens to overtake his comrades, who, during this conversation, have been proceeding in a direction opposite to Dante's course.

THE SIXTEENTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT—Having advanced so near to the next Circle, the eighth, that they can hear the fall of the Phlegethon, the Poets are met by another troop of similar sinners, from which three Noblemen of Florence advance to speak with them. Their conversation upon the state of their native City. The fall is then described, and Virgil by a signal draws towards the edge of the cliff a monster of terrible aspect that comes swimming upwards through the air to them.

NOW was I where I heard the echoed sound,
Like to the murmur of a swarming hive,
Of water falling in the other round.
When lo! three shadows all at once arrive,
Quitting in haste a troop that wander'd in 5
The rain, whence they such cruel pangs derive.
Direct to us they came with loudest din:
“Halt thou, who by thy garment’s fashion art
To our abandon’d fatherland akin.”
Alas! what wounds I saw on ev’ry part, 10
Fresh wounds and old, the gashes of the blaze!
As I remember it how aches my heart!
But at their cries my learned Teacher stays,
Speaking as tow’rds myself he turn’d his face:
“To these we should be courteous; stand at gaze. 15
And were it not the nature of this place
To dart forth fire, I in good sooth should say,
Speed would become thee better than this race.”

But they began again their ancient lay,
Even as we halted; then they circled fleet 20
About us, having made to us their way.
And as the naked, oil-besmeared athlete
Spies where with vantage he his foe may seize,
Ere in the strife their hands or weapons meet:
So circling us they fix'd their visages 25
On mine, that opposite directions took,
In wheeling round, the necks and feet of these.
“Alas! if thy high stomach cannot brook,
(Sick of this yielding sand,) what we have pray'd,
Ourselves,” one cried, “our parch'd and ragged look, 30
Still let our old renown thy soul persuade
To tell us who thou art, whose living feet
Thus trample on the sands of Hell unflay'd.
This shadow¹ on whose steps my footsteps beat,
Tho' flay'd and naked now, was once more grand, 35
Of higher lineage than perchance you weet.
He was the grandson of Gualdrada bland,
Hight Guidoguerra; many a deed of worth
Whilst living he achiev'd with head and brand.

¹ This was a valiant captain, to whom the victory of Charles of Anjou over Manfred, King of Naples, in 1266, at Benevento, was mainly owing. His father Ruggieri, was a son of Gualdrada, daughter of a noble Florentine, Bellincion Berti de' Ravignani, and she married Guido il Vecchio, an Austrian, and courtier of the Emperor Otto IV., who was deposed in 1212.

Crushing the sand who next to me steps forth 40
Is Tegghia' Aldobrandini;² ah! how grac'd
His honour'd name should be upon the earth!
And I, who with them am in torment plac'd,
Was Rusticucci,³ whom to anguish dire
A sullen wife beyond aught else abas'd." 45
Then I, had I been proof against the fire,
Had cast myself amongst them, and my learn'd
Teacher methinks had granted my desire.
But as I must have been parch'd up and burn'd,
My fear subdued the much-desir'd attempt, 50
Tho' greedily for their embrace I yearn'd.
Then I began: "'Tis sorrow, not contempt,
Fix'd in my breast by your condition here,
Nor from its thrall shall I be soon exempt;
It sprang as this my Master made it clear 55
In narrative to me, until I thought
Such noble race as you are of drew near.
Yes, of your land am I; mine ears have caught,
My tongue has ever told, with loving end,
Your honour'd names, the deeds which you have
wrought. 60

² This spirit, who has been mentioned c. vi., 79, was one of the Adimari; the rejection of his counsel ended in the defeat at Mont' Aperti, and the exile of the Guelphs from Florence.

³ Jacopo Rusticucci was a man of great wealth and liberality of spirit. It is not known who the "sullen wife" was.

Leaving this gall, for the sweet fruits I wend,
 Promis'd to me by my veracious Guide ;
 But to the centre I must first descend."

"So may thy spirit," one of them replied,
 "Ruling thy body, long thereto be knit, 65
 So after thee thy name shine far and wide,

As thou shalt tell if in our city sit
 Valour and courtesy as aye of yore,
 Or have such virtues quite forsaken it?

For Borsiere⁴ who our torments sore 70
 Shares late, and wand'ring with his peers remains,
 Has more distress'd us with the news he bore."

"An upstart race of men, and sudden gains
 Beget the pride and licence uncontroll'd,
 Which, oh! my Florence, now thy spirit plains!" 75

Exclaiming thus my face tow'rds Heav'n I hold ;
 Each eyed each, seeing this was my reply,
 As men eye men when fearless truth is told.

"If at all seasons thou canst satisfy
 All men at such small cost," they all rejoin'd, 80
 "Oh! well is thee, to speak so skilfully.

If thou shouldst leave this murky place behind,
 And turn to view the beauteous stars again,
 When saying '*Thus was I* shall glad thy mind,

⁴ Guglielmo Borsiere, a Florentine gentleman of great valour and of refined manners, but recently dead at the period of the poem. In the 8th Tale of the 1st day of the Decameron, his wit reproves the avarice of one Ermino de' Grimaldi of Genoa.

Unto mankind of us be then thy strain." 85

They broke their circle and away they sped,
So that their legs for wings you might have ta'en.

Nor could a single '*Amen*' have been said,
So quickly as those spirits disappear'd ;
My Master journied on when they had fled. 90

I follow'd ; after shortest way we near'd
Where close the waters sounded with such force,
That had we spoken we had scarce been heard.

Like to the stream⁵ that in its early course
Rushes from Monte Veso to the East, 95

From the left flank of Apennine, its source,
Call'd Acquacheta, ere the hills have ceas'd,
Thence takes a lower channel to the vale,
And at Forlì is of that name releas'd ;

Then roars past Benedetto's cloister'd pale, 100
And down the ravine on a ledge doth leap,
Where refuge for a thousand could not fail :

'Twas even thus, far down a rugged steep
We found a spot, where in short space the sound
Had stunn'd the ear, so those dusk waters sweep. 105

I had a cord⁶ about my middle wound,
With which, when first I started, 'twas my hope
The gaily-painted panther might be bound.

⁵ The river Montone, which passed a vast Benedictine monastery, containing one thousand monks at Forlì, and which flows into the Adriatic, near Ravenna.

⁶ This is the first mention of the cord, and various interpretations

When from me I had wholly loos'd the rope,
 Obeying what my Guide commanded so, 110
 I gave it to him coil'd and gather'd up.
 Receiving it, he wended right, and lo!
 Being yet some distance from the brow, he threw
 It far into the craggy deep below.
 "Now surely there shall follow something new," 115
 Unto myself I spake, "on this new act,
 That so intent my Master's eyes pursue."
 How cautiously should men all things transact
 When those are near, whose eye not only spies
 The deed, but scans the thought with skill exact; 120
 For he address'd me: "Speedily shall rise
 That I expect, and in a little space
 The thing thou dream'st shall be before thine eyes."
 Ever to truths that wear a lying face
 Should man to the uttermost his lips refuse, 125
 Tho' he be blameless they may bring disgrace.

are put upon it. Some think that Dante means he was girdled with every virtue, and quote *Purg. vii. 114*:

"D' ogni virtù portò cinta la corda;"
 Was girdled with the cord of ev'ry worth.

Lombardi says that Dante was in early life a Franciscan, and that as such he mortified the lusts of the flesh, or bound the panther; that he then throws it to the monster representing fraud, which hopes to seize a sinner who has concealed his vices under that holy symbol. Rossetti says, that the cord is justice, and that Dante hoped to bind the Panther, or Florence, with it. Foiled in this he places the cord in the hands of the representative of Ghibellinism.

But here I must speak out, and by the Muse
Of this my Comedy, reader, I swear,
(So may it not enduring favour lose!)
That swimming thro' the thick and swarthy air 130
Such object speeding upward I descried,
As to the boldest heart a marvel were.
As one returneth who the Deep hath tried
To loose the anchor, which has grappled close
Some rock or other thing the billows hide: 135
With spreading arms and folded feet⁷ it rose.

⁷ "With folded feet, in stoles of white,
On sleeping wings they sail."

TENNYSON, *Sir Galahad*.

THE SEVENTEENTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT :—The Monster described. Whilst Virgil discourses with it, Dante observes the souls of many usurers, whose names he discovers by the arms embroidered on pouches they wear round their necks. Returning to Virgil, he finds him seated on the monster's back, and mounting before his master, they are carried slowly downwards to the eighth circle. The monster hastily retreats, when they have dismounted.

“**B**EHOLD with barbed tail the monstrous brute,¹
That makes thro' mountains, ramparts, spears
a breach,

Whose odours all the universe pollute!”

Such was to me my Master's earliest speech,

Then to the shore he wav'd it with his hand, 5

Near to the limit of the rock-built beach.

¹ I think it is quite clear from this passage that Dante was mindful of every kind of allegory in his poem; and that in this instance he clearly meant, not only Charles of Valois, or one of his emissaries, but also Fraud, by this remarkable description of its attributes. He calls the monster Geryon, King of Gades, who was said to have three heads, and who kept numerous flocks, fed on human flesh. He was destroyed by Hercules in his tenth labour. At the same time, I believe that Dante intended a political interpretation also, and that Geryon is either Charles of Valois, or Guglielmo di Nogaret, whom he had sent to Florence, and of whom it is said that “he was a man of tortuous and dishonest mind, though of frank and honest bearing.”

That image foul of Fraud upon the land
Emerg'd, and forth his head and chest he thrust,
But did not drag his tail upon the strand.
His visage was the visage of the just, 10
For all his outer semblance was so fair ;
A serpent's was the form below the bust.
From the armpits grew two paws with shaggy hair ;
His back, his breast, and both his sides display'd
Bucklers and slipping nooses painted there. 15
Never has Turk or Tartar overlaid
With motlier hues the fabric of his train ;
Never Arachne's toil such textures made.
As near the shore the shallops oft remain,
Part on the water, part upon the land ; 20
And as among the gluttons of Almain,
The beaver crouches for the prey at hand :
Even so that most pernicious monster lies
Upon the rocky ledge that hems the sand.
His glist'ning tail in empty air he plies, 25
Twisting its fork envenom'd to and fro,
That to the barb a scorpion's sting supplies.
"Some little way," my Guide address'd me so,
"It now behoves us that our steps we bend
To the malicious beast that lies below." 30
To the right pap did we again descend ;
And better to avoid the sand and glare,
We made ten paces to the ledge's end.

No sooner came we to the monster's lair,
Than on the sand, a little distance thence, 35
We saw some squatting near the gulf,² and there
My Master spake: "That thy experience
Be fill'd with all that to this sphere belong,
Now to observe their bearing, hasten hence.
But still let not thy converse be too long; 40
With him I'll talk till thou thy steps retrace,
That he may grant to us his shoulders strong."
Thus once more over the extremest space
Of that, the seventh, Circle on I went
Alone, where sat the miserable race. 45
There at the eyes burst from them the lament;
Now 'gainst the flames, now 'gainst the scorching
ground,
Above, below, their hands some succour sent.
In summer even thus the bitten hound
Turns quick or with his paw, or with his snout, 50
Where fleas, or gnats, or gadflies most abound.
But whilst I cast mine eyes on those about,
On whom the flames pour'd down their agonies,
Not one of them I knew, yet without doubt
Hanging from ev'ry neck mine eye descries 55
A pouch with emblems strange, and hues the same,
Whereon they seem'd to batten with their eyes.

² Usurers, who, although upon the sand, as doing violence to Art, are yet near the pit of the Fraudulent—for usury and fraud are near akin.

But when, still gazing, I amongst them came,
A yellow purse I saw, and azure bright
A lion's visage and his lordly frame.³ 60
Then carrying round the current of my sight,
One I beheld more red than blood, I trow,
Bearing a goose, than whitest cream more white.⁴
Next one who wore in blue a gravid sow
Upon a satchel of pure white I met,⁵ 65
Who cried: "In this abyss what doest thou?
Now get thee hence! and for thou livest yet,
Know that Vitalian,⁶ neighbour once of mine,
Hereafter shall upon my left be set.
Paduan am I, where all is Florentine, 70
Oft on mine ear their stunning voices⁷ rose,
Exclaiming: 'Let the Master-Knight incline,
Who'll bring the satchel which three he-goats shows.'"
With mouth awry his tongue he then thrust forth
Beyond it, like an ox that licks his nose. 75
I fearing longer stay might wake his wrath,
Who 'gainst too long a stay his warning told,
Then from those wearied souls retrod the path.

³ The armorial bearings of the Gianfigliazzi, of Florence.

⁴ The arms of the Ubriacchi, of Florence.

⁵ The Scrovigni (from *scrofa*, a sow) of Padua. The speaker is Rinaldo.

⁶ Vitaliano del Dente, a celebrated usurer of Padua.

⁷ The voices of the Florentines are clamouring for Giovanni Buiamonte, to whose family the arms described belong, and who is called the Master-Knight, as being the most usurious usurer of the time.

Already mounted on the back, behold!
Of that ferocious beast my Master is, 80
And he address'd me: "Now be strong and bold!
Strange are the stairs conducting to the abyss;
Let me be in the midst; before me spring,
That so the tail produce us nought amiss."
Like one who is so near the shivering 85
Of ague, that his nails are livid-blue,
Who shudders if his eyes he chance to fling
On shadow: whilst he spoke became my hue;
But his reproaches shame in me produce,
Whence valiant lords make valiant servants too. 90
Settling myself upon those brawny thews,
I would have cried: "Fail not to grasp me close,"
But that my voice came not as was its use.
But he, who oft before when dangers rose,
Had succour'd me, soon as I sat thereon, 95
To hold me firm both arms about me throws,
Crying meanwhile: "Now forward, Geryon!
Wide be thy turnings, gentle thy descent,
Bethink thee what new weight thou bearest on."⁸
And as a sloop glides forth whence she is pent, 100
Backwards: so started he by small degrees;
But where his chest had been, his tail he bent

⁸ Another allusion to the weight of a human body, to which Geryon is unaccustomed.

Soon as he felt him freely at his ease,
Then mov'd his twisting carcase like an eel,
And to himself his claws haul'd in the breeze. 105
Methinks that none did greater terror feel
When Phaëton had flung the reins aside,
Which scorch'd the heav'ns,⁹ as many signs reveal :
Nor, when, whilst thaw'd the wax, the plumes did
glide
Adown his loins, the hapless Icarus, 110
Meanwhile, "Thy course is wrong," his father cried :
Than I, when I beheld surrounding us
The air alone, and vanish'd from my sight
All objects, save that creature hideous.
He slowly, slowly, wheel'd his downward flight; 115
But for the air which met me from below,
That he was moving had escap'd me quite.
Upon my right I heard the whirlpool now,
That still beneath made its tremendous roar,
Tow'rs which with starting eyes my head I bow, 120
And dreaded more the hollow than before ;
For flames I saw, and wailings smote mine ear,
That trembling I compress'd my thighs yet more.¹

⁹ The Milky Way was supposed by the Poets to be the scorching of the sky, when Phaëton drove the chariot of the Sun out of its usual track.

¹ To render his seat more secure.

But unperceiv'd till then, now saw I clear
The turning and descending; so 'twas seen 125
From horrors that on ev'ry side appear.
Like a gerfalcon which long time hath been
Upon the wing, seeing nor lure, nor prey,
Comes wearied down where he had risen keen,
Wheeling in air, and makes the falconer say, 130
"Ah me! thou stoopest," whilst he lights irate
And sulking from his master far away:
Thus Geryon on our feet depos'd our weight
Close where the shatter'd rock above us soar'd;
And then, unloaded of our bodies' freight, 135
He vanish'd, like an arrow from the cord.

THE EIGHTEENTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—The construction of the eighth circle, which is subdivided into ten pits. In this canto the Poets traverse two; in the first are seducers and Pandars, amongst whom are Cacci-anemico, of Bologna, and Jason. In the second are flatterers and harlots.

A PLACE call'd Malebolge¹ is in Hell,
 Buildd of rock, with iron-colour'd stains,
 As is the circle girding it as well.
 Lies in the middle of its healthless plains
 A yawning lake, wide-spreading and profound; 5
 Due season shall disclose what it contains.

¹ Malebolge means 'evil-pits,' and is the name of the eighth circle, which is round in shape, and divided into ten different pits or caverns by as many cliffs of rock. I think its construction may be best figured by supposing it like ten concentric wheels in shape; the outer extremities are then the tires—the banks of rock (v. 16) the spokes—the intervals between the tires are the pits or caverns—and the lake is the nave. It will, then, I hope, be understood how the last "cuts" the "rock-hewn bridges" or banks, which, but for its intervening, would be continued uninterruptedly from one side of the extreme boundary to the other; and yet this lake "gathers" them, for they all meet in it as one common centre. I am aware that my translation alone would be very difficult to follow, but I venture to think that the same may be said of the original, and I have done my best to render it literally, thinking it better to do so, and to give explanation by a note, than to paraphrase the description which Dante has given.

Thus, then, the girdle that remains is round,
And in ten pits divided, from this lake
Unto the foot of the hard, lofty mound.
As is the figure which the ramparts take 10
Where many trenches round a fortress gird,
And to the walls the sure defences make :
Such is the image which these gulfs afford ;
And as the bridges in such castles span
From the portcullis to the outer board : 15
Thus from the base the rock-hewn bridges ran,
Crossing the banks and ditches to the mere,
Which cuts, yet gathers them whence they began.
Thus shaken from the flanks of Geryon here
We found ourselves ; and then my Poet's feet 20
Turn'd leftward, and I journied in the rear.
Upon the right new agonies I meet,
New executioners, and newer woe,
With which the earliest cavern was replete.
Sinners stark naked in the gulf below ; 25
Some from the centre run towards our eyes,
Then back with us with vaster strides they go.
As Romans, when the multitudes arise
At Jubilee,² that all the populace
May cross the crowded bridge, their schemes
devise ; 30

² In 1300, Boniface VIII. proclaimed a jubilee and plenary indulgence at Rome, and caused the bridge leading to St. Peter's to

For on the one side, castlewards each face
 Is set, as to St. Peter's wends the throng,
 While on the other to the hill they pace:
 From here, from there, the dark-stain'd rock along
 Ran horned fiends each with a mighty scourge, 35
 And on their backs³ fell ruthlessly the thong.
 Ah me! how rapidly did they diverge
 When the first scourging fell on them, for none
 Stay'd till the second or the third should urge.
 But as I journied, fell mine eyes upon 40
 One of the spirits, and at once I said:
 "Mine eyes have tasted of that hapless one."⁴
 To scan him therefore I my footsteps stay'd,
 And halting with me, too, my well-lov'd Guide,
 With his consent, some backward steps I made. 45
 Bending his face, the scourg'd one thought to hide
 Himself from me, but 'twas of small avail;
 "Thou, casting on the earth thine eyes," I cried,

be divided lengthways; those going towards the *Castle* of St. Angelo and the cathedral taking one side, those towards *Mount Giordano* keeping to the other. It is still the habit in some continental cities (as for instance Dresden) for all those going in one direction to use one pavement only, whilst those meeting them use the other only.

³ The seducers of women for their own or others' lusts. The tormenting fiends are cuckolds, and therefore wear horns. This is the first pit or cavern.

⁴ Dante had seen this spirit when on earth, and thus recognises in him one Venedico Caccianemico, who to preserve his influence over Obizzo, Marquis da Esti, punished as a tyrant, c. x., 113, prevailed on his own sister Ghisola to yield to his desires.

" Unless thy features tell a lying tale,
 Venedico Caccianemico art thou ; 50
 What brought thee to so pungent a regale ?"⁵
 Then he : " Unwillingly do I avow,
 But am by thy clear speech so vanquished,
 That brings the old world to my mem'ry now.
 'Twas I who whilom fair Ghisola led 55
 To do the Marquis' will, tho' the infamy
 In many another lying shape be spread.
 Still of the Bolognese not only I
 Weep here ; nay, so this pit doth with us teem,
 So many tongues learn not their native ' Aye,'⁶ 60
 Between Savena and the Reno's stream ;
 Recall our grasping spirits to thy thought,
 If further proof or vouching needful seem."
 Whilst he was speaking yet, a demon brought
 His lash upon him, bellowing : " Away, 65
 Thou Pandar, here no women can be bought !"

No longer from my Escort would I stay,
 And we arriv'd, after few paces slight,
 Where from the cliff a shiver'd fragment lay.

⁵ " A sì pungenti salse." This may be merely ironical, although some assert that the place of execution outside Bologna was called Le Salse, and therefore Dante uses the name so familiar to a Bolognese. In that case there is a play upon words which cannot be rendered.

⁶ " Sipa," in the dialect of Bologna, is *si*, or yes. That city lies between the rivers Savena and Reno.

Then easily enough we scal'd its height, 70
Leaving behind those endless circling ways,
Upon its rugged ridge still veering right.
But coming where the yawning rock displays
An arch, where pass the wretches in this thrall,
My Leader said: "Now halt, that on thy gaze 75
The faces of those other sinners fall;
For as they travell'd with us to this place,
Thou hast not seen their visages at all."
Then from that ancient archway we could trace
Some coming tow'rds us from the other herd, 80
Whom in like fashion the big scourges chase.
Spake my good Master, ere I said a word
In question: "See yon huge shape hither sweep,
No tear-drop of regret his eyes hath blurr'd!
How well the kingly look his features keep! 85
'Tis Jason,⁷ who, by courage and by head,
Depriv'd the Colchians of their golden sheep.
Thence on his passage Lemnos visited,
There where the desp'rate women ruthlessly
Left all the males upon the island dead. 90
There he beguil'd the young Hypsipyle
With shows of love, and dulcet words ornate,
Who to the rest had first shown treachery.

⁷ Jason's story is well known. The Lemnian women had at the instigation of Aphrodite slain all the men; but Hypsipyle, the queen, had betrayed the others by preserving the life of her father, Thoas.

Pregnant he left her then, and desolate.

Such is the sin that dooms him to such woe, 95

Such is the vengeance for Medea's fate.

And all who thus betray must with him go.

Of the first cavern and of those who tear

Themselves therein, be this enough to know."

Already on a narrow ledge we were 100

That to the second bank across is thrown,

Whose shoulders to another archway bear.

From thence we found a people making moan

In the next hollow,⁸ snorting thro' the nose,

Smiting their bodies with their palms alone. 105

These banks were thickly crusted, for there rose,

Clinging to either side, the vapour's veil,

That causes smell and eyesight many throes.

So hollow'd is this pit, unless you scale

The archway's top where leans the rock across, 110

The eye for lack of strength would surely fail.

Thither we came, and saw deep in the fosse

A people plung'd in such vile excrement,

As seem'd the refuse of our bodies' dross.

And whilst my searching gaze beneath I bent, 115

I mark'd one head so laden with the mire,

No sign of lay or clerk did he present.

⁸ The second pit; that of flatterers and harlots.

He cried: "Why dost thou greedily desire
To view me more than all this filthy host?"
And I return'd: "Once when thy hairs were
drier 120

I saw thee, if my mem'ry be not lost;
Thou art Alessio,⁹ and of Lucca sprung,
Therefore of all the tribe I eye thee most."
Rapping his crown, he answered: "I am flung
Down here below by fawning flatteries,
Wherewith I never could o'ercharge my tongue." 125

"Now see thou stretch thy head," my Leader cries,
"A little forward, till thou canst detect
Quite clearly the foul visage with thine eyes
Of yonder harlot, sluttish and abject, 130
Who claws herself with grimed nails beyond,
Now squatting low, now on her feet erect.

The strumpet Thaïs!¹ when her cully fond
Demanded of her: 'Have I earn'd indeed
Thy thanks?' 'Aye, wondrously!' did she
respond. 135

Now of these sights be satiate our greed."

⁹ Alessio Interminei, a man of rank, but a terrible parasite.

¹ Thaïs is the harlot in the *Eunuchus* of Terence. Thraso, her paramour, had sent her a present of a young female slave, and so earned her thanks.

THE NINETEENTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—In the third pit are doomed the followers of Simon Magus, all those who for any corrupt motive barter away the things that are of God. The last pope but one is here discovered, and he foretells that a like fate awaits the then pontiff. Dante apostrophizes him sternly, and laments with fearless honesty the corruptions which rule the church. Virgil listens with evident approval, and when he has concluded, carries him towards the next pit.

OH! Simon Magus,¹ oh! his followers base,
 The things of GOD which goodness should enfold
 Even as 'twere a bride, rapacious race,
 You prostitute for silver and for gold,
 Now shall resound the trumpet of your doom, 5
 In the third cavern you your places hold.
 For we had mounted to the following tomb
 Already on the very spot, from whence
 The arch above the central fosse doth loom.
 Wisdom Most Highest! how Thy wondrous sense 10
 In Heav'n, on earth, in this vile world is found,
 How justly deals with all Thy Providence!
 On either slope and on the lowest ground
 The livid rock I saw with holes was bor'd,
 All of one magnitude and all were round. 15

¹ Simon the sorcerer, Acts viii. 18.

Nor in my beauteous fane where is ador'd
St. John, do those more large or less appear,
Thro' which the stream of baptism is pour'd.²
One of the which, 'tis not yet many a year,
I broke to save an infant drowning there; 20
May this my Seal all men from error clear.
From ev'ry mouth³ there issued to the air
A sinner's feet, and of the legs yet higher
Unto the calf—no other part was bare.
Both soles of ev'ry sinner were on fire, 25
And thence so strongly quiver'd ev'ry joint,
That osiers it had snapp'd, or twisted brier.
As flames upon a thing which oils anoint
Upon the surface only flickering play,
Here flames were flickering from heel to point. 30
“Who is that one tormented, Master, say,
More than his fellows glancing to and fro,”
I said, “on whom flames yet more ruddy prey?”

² In the cathedral of St. John, at Florence, were four cavities, made, as some translate it, for the baptizing priests. It seems unlikely, if such were their object, that water should have been in them, yet Dante says that he saved a child from drowning in one of them.

³ In each of these holes sinners were placed with their heads downward, and as a new Simoniac came, he pressed his predecessor down, and occupied his place, till himself thrust below by the next comer.

“If such thy will I’ll carry thee below,
Yonder where easier is the bank’s incline; 35
Himself, his guilt, there he himself shall show.”
“Thy pleasure,” I replied, “is ever mine;
Thou art my Lord, and know’st I do not quit
Thy will, and what I speak not canst divine.”
Reaching the fourth bank we ascended it; 40
Then turning left, downward my Master goes
To the strait bottom, pierc’d by many a pit.
My tender Master would not yet depose
Me from his flank, till to the pit we came
Of him, whose quiv’ring limbs describ’d his woes. 45
“Whoe’er thou art, holding thine upper frame
Beneath, and planted like a stake, sad shade,
Speak, if thou hast the pow’r,” I gan exclaim.
I stood there like the friar, ere shrift be made,⁴
By some foul murd’rer, fasten’d in the hole, 50
Who calls him back that death may be delay’d.
“Already stand’st thou here?” exclaim’d the soul;⁵
“Oh! Boniface, already here indeed!
By some few years at least has lied the scroll.

⁴ The criminal at the point of execution recalls the friar appointed to receive his confession, not from any pious motive, but to put off death for a few seconds.

⁵ This is Nicholas III., the predecessor of Celestine V., who immediately preceded Boniface VIII. He thus addresses Dante, believing him to be Boniface. It seems that there was a written prophecy that Boniface should die (as he did) in 1303. Thinking

Hast thou already satisfied the greed 55
For which thou didst not fear by treachery
To win the fair Bride,⁶ then to bid her bleed?"
As one who understands not a reply,
Whom all about him scoff at and deride,
Who knows not how to answer: so stood I. 60
"Now tell him quickly," forthwith Virgil cried,
"I am not he, not he thy thoughts bespeak."
And as I was commanded, I replied.
Therefore he shook both feet with sudden tweak;
In weeping tones, sighing disconsolate, 65
He answer'd: "Then of me what dost thou seek?
If to learn who I am press with such weight
Upon thee, that thou didst descend therefor
Yon steep, know once I wore the mantle great.
Like a true son of the she-bear,⁷ I bore 70
Such greed to advance my cubs, that I have sped
Myself below—my purse was once my store.
And all the others dragg'd beneath my head
Preceding me of yore in simony,
Within the rock's strait split are fastened. 75
I shall fall headlong thither too, when he
Comes, whom I fancied thee, when I did greet
Thee with the question put so suddenly.

him already in Hell in 1300, Nicholas believes that the scroll has lied.

⁶ The Church.

⁷ Nicholas III. was of the great Orsini family.

Already is it longer since my feet
Have thus been bak'd, and I stand so revers'd, 80
Than he his doom with glowing soles shall meet.
To him a shepherd,⁸ in all law unvers'd,
Of viler crimes shall from the West succeed,
By whom we both shall deeper be immers'd.
That newer Jason⁹ he, of whom we read 85
In Maccabees, and as his King was bland,
The grace of Gallia's King shall be his meed."
If I was mad I cannot understand,
But in this wise I answer'd hastily:
"Now tell me thou, what gold did He demand, 90
Thy Lord and mine, that at the first the key
He should intrust to blessed Peter? Nought
Certes did He require, but: 'Follow me!'
Nor from Matthias gold nor silver sought
Peter and all the rest, when in the room 95
Of the lost spirit he was chos'n by lot.
Then sojourn here—well hast thou earn'd thy doom,
And guard with care the treasure foully gain'd,
Thro' which such zeal 'gainst Charles thou didst
assume.¹

⁸ The Archbishop of Bordeaux, Clement V. He transferred the Papal Court to Avignon, in 1308.

⁹ Jason offered Antiochus 360 talents of silver if he would appoint him High Priest. 2 Maccabees iv. 7.

¹ This refers to a bribe supposed to have been given to Nicholas by John of Procida to prevent his interference in the conspiracy against Charles of Anjou.

And were it not that I am yet restrain'd, 100
With rev'rence for the keys sublime imbued,
Once in the joyful life by thee maintain'd,
I might have us'd reproaches still more rude ;
For avarice like yours the world has griev'd,
Trampling the worthy, lifting up the lewd. 105
Shepherds like you the Evangelist conceiv'd,
When she, who sits upon the waves, with kings
In vilest whoredoms was of him perceiv'd.
She, who with all her seven heads upsprings,
And her ten horns as evidence display'd, 110
Whilst yet her husband joy'd in virtuous things.²
A God of gold and silver you have made ;
How differs the idolater's from thine,
Save he to one, you to an hundred pray'd?
But not from thy conversion, Constantine, 115
But from that dow'r,³ alas! the evil sprung,
Which to the first rich Pope thou didst assign."
Whilst such reproachful verses yet I sung,
With violence the spirit shook both feet,
Either by conscience or by anger stung. 120

² The seven heads mean the Seven Hills of Rome; the ten horns the many tributary kingdoms, which she displayed as 'evidence' of her righteousness, whilst 'her Husband' (the Pope) rejoiced in Virtue alone.

³ The Emperor Constantine's supposed gift of the Lateran to Sylvester, the Bishop of Rome.

But I believe my Master deem'd it meet,
He listen'd with a smile of such content,
Hanging upon my utter'd words discreet.
Then both his arms again he round me bent;
And when he had me all upon his chest, 125
He mounted by the path of his descent.
Nor wearied, tho' so close to him I press'd,
He bore me to the summit of the bridge
Thrown from the fourth unto the following crest.
His cherish'd load he plac'd upon the ledge 130
Gently, upon a rock so rough and steep,
That to the goat 'twould be no easy ridge.
Thence was reveal'd another valley deep.

THE TWENTIETH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—In the fourth pit the Poets find the pretended prophets and sorcerers. Of these Amphiaraus, Tiresias, Aruns, and Manto, are particularly noticed, and seeing the last, Virgil narrates the origin of Mantua, his native city. Eurypilus and others are then shown, and the Poets proceed.

OF torments new again my verse I swell,
To form material for the twentieth song
Of my first lay, of spirits plung'd in Hell.
For I was rul'd by disposition strong
Thoroughly to scan the new-disclos'd abyss, 5
Bath'd in the tears of agony and wrong.
Thro' the encircling vale mine eye descries
A silent, weeping crowd,¹ advancing slow,
Like those who in the world chant litanies.
And as my eye descended, all below 10
Seem'd to be metamorphos'd wondrously;
Between the chin and breast I saw it so.
Their faces from their loins were turn'd awry,
And, retrograding they approach'd, because
In front all sight was reft them utterly. 15 .

¹ False prophets and seers.

Paralysis indeed may sometimes cause
In human kind deformity so deep ;
I never saw such, nor believe it was.
Reader! so grant thee GOD the fruits to reap
Of that thou readest, as thou turn'st in thought 20
How I constrain'd mine eyelids not to weep,
Beholding our own figures near me brought,
But so deform'd, that tear-drops from the eyes
Bathing the buttocks on the rump were caught.
Truly I wept, against the crags that rise 25
From the hard cliff reclining, and then said
Mine Escort: " Art thou still of the unwise?
Here pity only lives when it is dead ;
For who is more iniquitous than he
Who weeps for those GOD's judgment visited? 30
Lift up, lift up thine head on high, and see
Him² for whom earth gap'd in the Thebans' sight,
That they exclaim'd: ' Ah! whither dost thou flee,
Amphiaraus? wherefore quit the fight?'
He tarried nought, but to the valley press'd 35
Of Minos, who embraces all so tight.

² Amphiaraus, one of the Seven against Thebes; as he was quitting the battle the earth gaped and swallowed him. He had a temple at Oropus, in Attica, and an oracle, which was consulted by Mardonius, the Persian, before the battle of Plataea, where he was slain.

Lo! he has chang'd his shoulders into chest;
'Twas his pretence to see too far before,
So look and motion backward are address'd.
Tiresias³ see, who a new aspect bore, 40
When from a male to female he was turn'd,
Transmuting ev'ry member that he wore.
When he again the twining snakes discern'd,
His rod was forc'd to separate the two,
Ere to the manly plumage he return'd. 45
Aruns⁴ his back doth to his belly show;
On Luni's mountains, (where Carrara's wight
Tilleth the soil, his dwelling far below,)
Had he a cavern in the marble white
For his abode, whence of the planets fair 50
And ocean nought might intercept his sight.
And she who covers up her bosom there
With loosen'd locks, that thou mayst not behold,
Who therefore seems to have a skin of hair,
Was Manto,⁵ who search'd many lands of old, 55
And chose at length the city of my birth;
List therefore to me till my tale be told.

³ The celebrated prophet of Thebes.

⁴ An Etrurian soothsayer. Luni is in Tuscany.

⁵ She was the daughter of Tiresias. The city of Bacchus is Thebes, and v. 59, refers to its capture by the seven kings.

When from this life her father issued forth,
And Bacchus' city felt the heavy thrall,
Long time was she a wanderer on earth. 60
In Italy a lake lies 'neath the tall
Alps, which from us Germania divide
Above Tyrol, that men Benacus⁶ call.
Into this lake a thousand fountains glide,
(From Garda to the Val Camonica,) 65
Bathing the Apennines with slacken'd tide.
A spot there is upon the lake midway;
The shepherds of Verona, Brescia, Trent,⁷
Might on that spot the hallow'd sign display.
There stands Peschiera, fair, strong muniment, 70
Fronting Bergamo, Brescia too, I trow,
And near it falls the shore in deep descent.
There all the surplus water dropping slow,
That cannot stay upon Benacus' breast,
Must thro' green pastures in a river flow. 75
Soon as the stream moves on in its unrest
'Tis call'd the Mincio, not Benacus more,
Till at Governo by the Po suppress'd.
Ere far its course, on a wide plain doth pour
The river, where it spreads and forms a lake, 80
Whence in the summer ill diseases soar.

⁶ Now the Lago di Garda.

⁷ These three bishoprics meet at Prato di Fame, where their Bishops might give their blessing, and exercise spiritual functions.

As the cruel maid did thence her journey make,
Amidst the marsh an island met her ken,
Uncultur'd, which all human tribes forsake.
There, to avoid all intercourse with men, 85
Resting, her art she and her minions plied;
She liv'd, and left her corse within the fen.
Because the spot was strongly fortified
On all sides by the marish, to it came
The scatter'd few around from ev'ry side. 90
O'er those dead bones a city it became,
From her who had selected it of yore,
Without fresh omen, Mantua was its name.
At first its burghers number'd many more,
Before Count Casalodi's foolishness⁸ 95
The great deceit of Pinamonte bore.
Therefore I warn thee, if thou hear'st express
That otherwise my native city rose,
Let no untruth o'ergloze my truthfulness."
"Master," I answer'd him, "Thy reas'ning shows
So clear, and my belief o'ermasters so,
All else shall be as coal that no more glows.
Say, of the people wand'ring to and fro
Has there no one deserving note appear'd?
This is the only thing that strikes me now," 105

⁸ Pinamonte Bonacossi persuaded Alberto Casalodi, the ruler in Mantua, to banish many of its most distinguished citizens. With these he then allied himself, and overthrew Casalodi, and obtained the supreme control in 1269.

And he replied: "A seer was he whose beard
 Does from his cheeks on his brown shoulders drift;
 He liv'd when Greece of all her males was clear'd,
 That in the cradles scarcely one was left;⁹
 At Aulis he with Calchas cast the time, 110
 When the first cable at his sign was cleft.
 So somewhere in my Tragedy¹ sublime
 By me his name is sung, Eurypilus;
 Thou knowest where, who knowest all my rhyme.
 That other shade whose loins are narrow'd thus 115
 Was Michael Scot,² who knew the fraudulent
 Device of ev'ry magic infamous.
 Guido Bonatti³ see; behold Asdent';
 Glad were he now if he had ever stay'd
 By hides and cord—too late does he repent. 120

⁹ At the time of the expedition to Troy.

"Dismay'd and fearful of some dire event,
 Eurypilus to inquire their fate was sent."

DRYDEN'S *Æn.* ii., v. 159.

But Pitt is more literal:

"We sent Eurypilus to Phœbus' shrine."

¹ I do not know why Dante called his poem a *Comedy*, unless it was from his lowly appreciation of it, as compared with other great masterpieces. It has been suggested that he gives it that name because it ends happily, but that consideration would forbid his calling the *Æneid* a *Tragedy*.

² A celebrated magician, a native of Scotland.

³ Bonatti of Forlì; Asdente, a cobbler of Parma. The three last mentioned flourished in the thirteenth century.

These wretched women here at witchcraft play'd, 125
And did the needle, spindle, woof despise,
Plying with herbs and ghosts the sorcerer's trade.
But now away; Cain⁴ with his thornbush hies
Of either hemisphere to gain the bound, 130
Touching the waters where Sevilla lies.
The moon already yesternight was round;
And many a time, this must thou not forget,
She aided thee in yonder wood profound."
Then on we mov'd while he was speaking yet. 135

⁴ The spots on the moon were said to be Cain who held a bush of thorns. The moon is at the most western part of her course, setting in the waters near Seville. As she was full the previous night, the sun must have risen two hours, and we are on the morning of Saturday. The time of year is the vernal Equinox. At the end of c. xi., we were approaching the dawn, since when the Poets have only gone through one circle, and part of the eighth; the circles, moreover, grow less and less, though from the greater gravity of the criminals they become more interesting to Dante.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—From the crown of the cliff leading to the fifth pit, Dante observes that it is full of a thick and boiling tar, in which a multitude of embezzlers is seething, whilst a fiend is rushing to and fro, carrying fresh sinners to the pool, and hurling them into it. The Poets then encounter a troop of Demons, with whose leader Virgil confers, and prevails upon him to send an escort of his inferiors to guide him on his way.

THUS on from bridge to bridge in much discourse,
 To sing of which my Comedy is slack,
 We went, till on the summit from our course
 We halted to inspect another crack
 Of Malebolge, and more fruitless¹ woes; 5
 And I perceiv'd that it was wondrous black.
 As in the Arsenal of Venice glows
 The boiling clammy pitch in winter's days,
 The many leaks of damag'd barks to close,
 That cannot sail; for while that season stays, 10
 One man refits his ship, one calks with tow
 The ribs which oft have cross'd the ocean's ways;
 One hammers on the stern, and one the prow—
 Some shape the oar, and some the cable twine—
 Here mainsail, there the mizensail they sew: 15

¹ "Fruitless," because leading to no mitigation of torment.

So not by fire, but by the Art Divine,
Beneath there boil'd a thick and pitchy tide,
Coating on ev'ry part the steep incline.
Itself I saw, yet nothing more descried,
Except the bubbles which the boiling rais'd, 20
And all the pitch heave up, and then subside.
But whilst beneath most fixedly I gaz'd,
"Look, look!" and from the spot where I did
stand
My Master shouting, dragg'd me back in haste.
I turn'd like one restless till he hath scann'd 25
A thing wherefrom he yet must fly away,
Who by the sudden terror all unmann'd,
Yet seeing it from flight does not delay ;
Behind a sable Demon met my glance,
Who running fast made o'er the cliff his way. 30
Ah me ! how savage was his countenance,
How terrible his action to my sight !
Swift-footed, open-wing'd was his advance.
Upon his shoulder, sharp and proud upright,
Astride a sinner's heavy weight he bore, 35
Grasping the sinews of his ankles tight.
"You sharp-claw'd!" from our bridge went forth his
roar,
"One of the elders of St. Zita, lo !
Plunge him beneath whilst I return for more

Into that region where they overflow ; 40
 All, save Bonturo,² barter there, 'tis said ;
 And there for lucre ' Yes' is turn'd to ' No.'"³
 He hurl'd him down, and turning backwards fled
 On the hard rock, and never loosen'd hound
 So eagerly behind a robber sped. 45
 The sinner sank, then rose all twisted round ;
 Ambush'd beneath the bridge, the Demons cried :
 " Here for the Holy Face no room is found,⁴
 'Tis diff'rent swimming from the Serchio's tide !
 And therefore if our claws thou wouldst not feel, 50
 Beneath the pitch take heed that thou abide."
 Seizing him with a hundred hooks of steel,
 They shouted : " 'Neath the surface mayst thou hop,
 And there, if thou canst do 't, in secret steal."
 Not otherwise cooks make their scullions drop 55
 And plunge the meat with hooks into the pot,
 So that it may not float upon the top.

² Santa Zita is the tutelar Saint of Lucca, to whom its Cathedral is dedicated. The Elder brought by the fiend is Martino Bortao. Bonturo Bonturi, of the family de' Dati, betrayed his own party to the Guelphs, in 1314. The exception of him is ironical.

³ This verse gives perhaps the best definition of the "barattieri," the persons in the pitch ; persons guilty of embezzling, bartering, trafficking for money, or of shameless nepotism.

⁴ The face of Our Saviour, carved upon the bridge over the Serchio at Lucca. The contortions of Bortao, the fiends pretend to think, are his endeavours to bow to CHRIST's image.

My Master spake: "That they behold thee not
With me, behind some jagged fragment crawl,
And there awhile for safer refuge squat. 60

Let no offence they offer me appal
Thy soul, for well their foul designs I know,
Since once before I mingled in such brawl."
Beyond the bridge's head he journied now,
But when the sixth bank he had mounted, there 65
He needed in good sooth a fearless brow.

As from behind upon a beggar tear
The mastiffs in their rage tempestuous,
Who where he stands afar begins his prayer:
From underneath the bridge they sallied thus, 70
And turning all their hooks against my Guide,
Aloud, "Be none amongst you furious;
And ere your talons seize on me," he cried,
"To hear me speak let one advance alone,
Whether to hook me let him then decide." 75

"Go, Malacoda!" shouted all, and one,
Whilst all the rest stood firm, the troop did leave,
And crying: "How shall this avail?" came on.
"Oh! Malacoda, and canst thou believe
That thro' the dangers ye oppose to me, 80
I come," he spake, "unarm'd as you perceive,
Without God's Will and favouring Destiny?
Let me proceed, for I must manifest
These wilds to one besides, by Heav'n's decree."

But then so toppled o'er his haughty crest, 85
That he let fall the weapon at his feet,
Crying: "We may not strike him," to the rest.
My Leader cried: "Ho! thou who hast thy seat
Between the bridge's crags, down lowly bent,
Return to me secure from thy retreat." 90
Therefore I mov'd, and swiftly to him went,
And as the devils further forward veer,
I dreaded they should break their covenant.
Thus once I saw the infantry in fear
Leaving Caprona⁵ under treaty sign'd, 95
Beholding many enemies so near.
So all my person closer I inclin'd
Towards my Guide, diverting not my look
From their expression, which was far from kind.
They spoke amongst themselves, each eager hook 100
Extending: "Shall I touch him on the thigh?"
"Ay, see thou grapple him!" another spoke.
The fiend who with my Master formerly
Had been conversing, suddenly wheel'd round,
Exclaiming: "Scarmiglione, lay it by!" 105
To us he spake: "No further by this mound
Is progress possible, for yawning lies
The sixth arch shiver'd to the lowest ground.

⁵ In 1290 Dante was with the Florentine force at the siege of the Castle of Caprona, on the Arno, when the Luccese garrison were obliged to surrender from lack of provisions and stores.

If ye are bent on further enterprise

Make by the cavern of the rock your way, 110

Near us another cliff the path supplies.⁶

Exactly five hours later yesterday

Twelve hundred, six, and three-score years did end

Since here the mountain-road was rent away.⁷

Some of my minions I'm about to send 115

To see if aught uncover'd meet their ken ;

Proceed with them, for they shall not offend.

On Alichino, Calcabrina then ;

Next thou Cagnazzo," he began to speak ;

" Let Barbariccia head the troop of ten. 120

Here Libicocco, Draghignazzo eke,

Sharp-tusk'd Ciriatto come, and Farfarel,

Graffiacan, Rubicant of maddest freak.

Search round about the seething caldron well ;

To yonder arch in safety see these be, 125

That spans unbroken o'er the hollows fell."

I cried: " Oh! Master, what is this I see?

Without their convoy let us journey still ;

If Thou canst go, seek no fresh guide for me.

Dost Thou preserve even now Thy wonted skill, 130

Yet seëst not that with their fangs they grin,

And how their eyebrows threaten us with ill?"

⁶ This is a lie of Malacoda's, c. xxiii., 140.

⁷ The previous day having been Good Friday, and the year being 1300, 1266 years had passed since the crucifixion, when even the rocks of Hell were rent asunder.

“I will not have thee fear,” did he begin,
“For let them grin away as they incline,
’Tis against those the boiling pool within.” 135
Backward upon the left bank turn’d the nine;
Yet first had ev’ry one against his teeth
Compress’d his tongue, waiting his leader’s sign;
He made the filthy trumpet sound beneath.

THE TWENTY-SECOND CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—More embezzlers are shown in the scalding pitch. Ciampolo, a native of Navarre, tells his story, and mentions some of his companions. He contrives to outwit the Demons, and escapes from them; but upon this two of them fall a fighting, and both topple into the pitch. The Poets depart, leaving the rest attempting to extricate their comrades.

I HAVE seen horsemen in the combat meet,
And shifting camp with many an uncouth sign,
And have beheld them too in wild retreat;
And skirmishers upon those plains of thine,
Arezzo, with light squadrons to and fro 5
Meet in the lists, and in the tourney join,
Whilst clash the bells, and whilst the trumpets blow,
To drums and signs from castle-battlement,
Now with our native, now with foreign show:
But never to so strange an instrument 10
Had I seen horse or footmen move till then,
Nor ships at sign from earth or firmament.
Then we proceeded with the Demons ten,
Ah! dire companionship!—but it is true,
Gluttons haunt taverns, churches godly men. 15
But ever on the pitch I fix'd my view,
To see whate'er the cavern might contain,
And all the miserable boiling crew.

As dolphins, when they make the warning plain
To mariners, their curving backs will bare, 20
To bid them save their vessel from the main:
Thus to relieve his torments, here and there
One of the sinners would his back display,
Then hide it swifter than the lightning's glare,
As at a ditch's wat'ry margin stay 25
The frogs, exposing snout alone, and hide
The feet and all the thicker parts away:
So stood the sinners here on ev'ry side;
But quick as Barbariccia nearer sped
Thus they withdrew beneath the seething tide. 30
I saw, and yet my heart rebounds with dread,
One left, as it will happen of a brood
That one frog stays when all the rest have fled,
And Graffiacan, who nearest to him stood,
Seiz'd with his hook his pitch-bedraggled hair, 35
Landing him like an otter from the flood.
Of all the Demons' names I was aware,
I mark'd them when the choice upon them fell,
And by what names each call'd the other there.
"Oh! Rubicante, see thou fasten well 40
Thy claws upon his back that it be flay'd,"
Shouted together those accurs'd of Hell.
Then, "Oh! my Master, if Thou canst," I said,
"Learn who he is who yonder haplessly
Is to the power of his foes betray'd." 45

My Leader to his side approach'd more nigh,
Demanded of him whence he sprung, and he
Replied: "A native of Navarre am I.¹
Page to a lord my mother stablish'd me,
For she had borne me to a spendthrift-fool, 50
A waster of himself and property.
Then liv'd I under good King Tebald's rule;
To bartering I betook me next in sooth,
Whereof I give account in this hot pool."
Ciriatto then, on either side whose mouth 55
A hog-like tusk protruded from his jaws,
Show'd how to maul him with a single tooth.
The mouse had fallen amongst ruthless claws!
Him Barbariccia in his arms embrac'd,
Exclaiming: "Whilst I hug him do you pause!" 60
Towards my Master the tormentor fac'd,
Saying: "If thou desirest more to know
Ere others rend him question him in haste."
Then he: "Tell of the guilty souls below;
Knowest thou none of Latian origin 65
Beneath the pitch?" He said: "I left but now
One to that neighbourhood at least akin;
Had I remain'd close cover'd up with him,
Nor hook nor talon had I dreaded then."

¹ Said to be one Ciampolo. Tebaldo II., King of Navarre, died in 1270, whilst he was transporting from Tunis the bones of Louis IX. (St. Louis), his father-in-law.

“ We suffer long !” cried Libicocco grim ; 70
And speaking with his claw his arm he took,
Rending the mangled muscle from the limb.
Next Draghignazzo would have plung’d his hook
Into his thigh, when sudden wheeling round
Their chief turn’d on them with an evil look. 75
When some slight calm amongst the troop was found,
Without delay my Master gan inquire
Of him, who still contemplated his wound :
“ But who was he, from whom thou say’st that dire
Thy parting was, when thou cam’st hitherward ?” 80
And he return’d : “ Gomita ’twas, a friar ;²
He of Gallura, vessel of all fraud,
Who having in his hands his sov’reign’s foes,
So treated them that still they give him laud.
Their money he receiv’d, and as he shows, 85
Let them escape ; in other charges more
No petty trafficker was he, God knows !
Here Michael Zanche, Lord of Logodore,
Tarries with him, and never were those twin
Tongues weary yet of their Sardinian lore. 90
Alas ! alas ! behold that other grin ;
More would I tell thee, but I shudder lest
He should approach to scrape my scabby skin.”

² Gallura and Logodoro were two of the divisions of Sardinia. This monk governed the former for Nino de’ Visconti of Pisa ; Michael Zanche governed Logodoro.

Then turning round the mighty chief address'd
Farfarello, whose eyes with lust to smite 95
Were glistening: "Hence, bird of evil nest!"
"If ye desire an audience or sight .
Of Tuscans, or of Lombards, it is fit
I summon them," he said, for now his fright
Was lessen'd; "let those sharp claws rest a bit, 100
That those I call may not their vengeance dread
And I will cite, whilst on this spot I sit,
Seven spirits hither in my single stead;
For I will whistle, 'tis our wont well-known
When one in safety may thrust forth his head." 105
Cagnazzo with his muzzle upward thrown,
Wagging his head, exclaim'd: "Malicious plot!
Right cunningly devis'd to cast him down!"
He who of wiles a mighty store had got,
Replied: "Malicious? even so indeed, 110
To aggravate my fellows' woeful lot!"
Then Alichino 'gainst the other's heed
Could not refrain, but cried: "If thou shouldst cast
Thee down, not after thee a-foot I'll speed,
But o'er the pitch I'll ply my pinions fast; 115
Leave we our vantage, be this bank his fort—
Try if our cunning be by thine surpass'd."
Oh! Reader, mark a game of freshest sort!
The Demons turn'd to the other shore their eyes,
He first who had least stomach for the sport. 120

Well chose his time Navarra's offspring wise;
He fix'd his feet on earth, and with a leap
Away he bounds, and their intent defies.
Stricken were all, with anger, his most deep
Who was the occasion of their sore disgrace; 125
"I'll have thee yet," he cried with forward sweep.
Little it bootéd, for no wings outpace
The spirit urg'd by terror; down he div'd,
The other rose again with upward face.
Never more swiftly widgeon, that perceiv'd 130
The stooping falcon, div'd to shun his aim,
Whilst he mounts up again, worn out and griev'd.
But Calcabrina, weary of the game,
Pursued him flying, with a joy intense
As one had scaped that one remain'd to maim. 135
And as the barterer had got him thence,
'Gainst Alichin I saw his talons move,
And o'er the moat they grappled; in defence
That other did a well-train'd kestrel prove,
Able to grapple him, and both, I weet, 140
Fell in the boiling caldron as they strove.
A speedy separator was the heat!
Vainly they strove to raise themselves to land,
For as with glue were fix'd their pinions fleet.
But Barbariccia sorrowing with his band, 145
Sent four amongst them to the other coast,
With all their weapons, and on either hand

In brief had they descended to their post;
Then stretch'd their hooks to those so foully soil'd,
Who now were almost shrivell'd 'neath the crust. 150
But we departed leaving them embroil'd.

THE TWENTY-THIRD CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT :—Dante's terror of the fiends continuing, Virgil at length leaps from the rock, bearing him in his arms, into the sixth cavern, the 'College' of Hypocrites. Two of the Podestas of Florence, the Joyous Brethren—Caiaphas, high-priest of the Jews, and his father-in-law Annas. Virgil discovers the lie told by Barbariccia, and leads on to the seventh hollow, troubled and wrathful.

IN silence, one by one, with none to guide,
 One first, one following, our course we hold,
 As Minor Friars in procession glide.
 But all my thoughts upon that fable¹ roll'd
 Of Æsop, rous'd by the late-ended war, 5
 Wherein the fate of frog and mouse he told.
 Not more alike '*Now*' and '*At present*' are,
 Than these two stories, if together set
 End and beginning be with earnest care.
 For as one thought another will beget, 10
 So of that earlier one was born a thought,
 Doubling the terror I was feeling yet.

¹ The frog offered to carry the mouse on his back across a pond, intending to devour him; but whilst crossing a kite devoured both. The fable is not Æsop's.

‘For us,’ I ponder’d, ‘this contempt was wrought,
This loss and mockery were heap’d on these,
Such that in sooth they well may be distraught. 15
If wrath their in-born malice should increase,
To us more ruthlessness will they display,
Than greyhounds to the leveret they seize.’
Then turning round to view the travers’d way,
My hairs on end with terror I could feel, 20
And I exclaim’d: “Lord, great is my dismay
Of Malebranch, if Thou dost not conceal
Thyself and me at once—they come, alas!
So strong I fancy it, the pang is real.”
He answer’d: “Were I made of leaded glass, 25
Thine outer semblance would not on me shine
More quickly than thine inner fashion has
Stamp’d itself on me; thy thoughts blend with mine,
Like in reality, and like in face,
That I have form’d from both one sole design. 30
From hence to the next cavern we will trace
The downward pathway if the bank’s inclin’d,
And thus we shall escape the fancied chase.”
He had not finish’d laying bare his mind,
When I beheld where with spread wings they came 35
To seize us, and ah me! not far behind.
Then suddenly my Guide caught up my frame,
Even as a mother, whom an uproar wakes,
Who close beside her sees the raging flame;

Who tarries not, but quick her infant takes 40
And flies, less caring for herself than it,
That one poor shift her only covering makes.
Supine upon the hanging cliff he lit,
Leaping from whence the hard bank's summit rose,
Which forms one boundary to the other pit. 45
No stream so swiftly thro' the conduit goes
To turn around the wheel of a land-mill,
Not even when nearest to the spokes it flows:
As now upon the margin of that hill
My Master, bearing me upon his breast, 50
Not like a comrade, like his own son still.
Scarcely his feet upon the bottom press'd
Of the deep fosse, than on the eminence
They stood above; but him no fears molest.
For these being will'd by Highest Providence 55
To serve in the fifth hollow, Its restraint
Withheld from them the pow'r of moving thence.
Beneath a populace bedaub'd with paint
We found, with slowest footsteps circling on,
Weeping and jaded in their looks, and faint. 60
They all wore mantles with the cowls drawn down
Over the eyes, and made in such a mode
As those are made for friars in Cologne.²

² Mr. Cary says, "They wore their cowls unusually large," which was probably to betoken a peculiar sanctity.

The outside with a dazzling gilding glow'd;
 Leaden is all the inside, and the stern
 Fred'rick's³ were merely straws to such a load. 65
Oh! weary habit, made for use eterne!
 Again towards the left with all that race,
 Intent upon their wretched moans we turn.
But from the load, this wearied populace 70
 Travell'd so slowly, that we join'd a rout
 Of fresh companions at each new-made pace.
Then I address'd my Master: "Find me out
 Some I may recognise by name or deed,
 And in Thy progress cast Thine eyes about." 75
One knew the language of the Tuscan breed,
 And shouted from behind: "Your feet restrain,
 Oh! you, who thro' the dusky vapours speed!
What you desire from me perchance you'll gain."
 So Virgil turn'd and spake: "A moment stay, 80
 Then at his pace we will proceed again."
I halted, seeing two whose eyes display
 Their spirits' haste to catch me, but delay'd
 By the huge burden, and the narrow way.
They overtook us, and at first survey'd 85
 Me with a sidelong glance, but utter'd nought;
 Then turning from me, to themselves they said:

³ The Emperor Frederick II., see c. x., 119. He punished traitors by enveloping them in lead, and casting them into flames.

“One lives—for see the throbbing of his throat;
And if they wear no heavy stole of lead
Tho’ dead, what privilege does this denote?” 90
To me they spake: “Oh! Tuscan, who dost tread
The college of the hypocrites forlorn,
Do not disdain to tell where thou wast bred.”
I answer’d: “On fair Arno I was born
In the great city,⁴ and ’twas there I grew; 95
This is the body I have ever worn.
But who are you, upon whose cheeks the dew
Of anguish as I now behold drops down?
What pang is yours so glaring to the view?”
“These orange cloaks,” one answer’d, “we have on, 100
With lead are loaded, and such weights as these
May easily compel the scales to groan.
We both were Joyous Brethren,⁵ Bolognese,
I Catalano, Loderingo he;
Together by thy fatherland’s decrees 105
Elected, as ’tis usual one should be
Alone, to keep the peace, and what we were
Still in Gardingo’s suburb you may see.”

⁴ Florence.

⁵ This was the popular nickname of an order called di Santa Maria. In 1266, Napoleone Catalano, a Guelph, and Loderingo degli Andalò, a Ghibelline, were chosen Conservators of the Peace in Florence. When elected they threw off the mask, and, bribed by the Guelphs, destroyed the mansion of the Uberti, in that part of Florence called Gardingo.

Then I began: "Oh! monks, the woes you bear—"
But stopp'd, for on the ground one crucified, 110
Burst on my view, with three stakes fasten'd there.
A writhing shook his form, when me he eyed,
Flutter'd his beard with his deep-sighing breath;
But Catalano, who his pangs descried,
"That spirit⁶ thou behold'st pinn'd down," he saith, 115
"Urg'd on the Pharisees 'twas destiny
That for the people One should suffer death.
Naked athwart this pathway he must lie,
Condemn'd, as thou perceiv'st, to undergo
The weight of ev'ry one who passes by. 120
The father of his wife partakes his woe
Within this ditch, and all that council vile,
That for the Jews an evil seed did sow."
Then I mark'd Virgil wondering awhile
At him who on the cross extended lay, 125
Degraded in perpetual exile.
Next, to the friar he address'd his say:
"Do not refuse, if you have leave, to tell
If on the right existeth any way
Whereby to issue hence, and not compel 130
The sable angels to afford their aid,
To guide us from this deep abyss of Hell."

⁶ Caiaphas, the high-priest, who concealed beneath an assumed anxiety for the Jewish people, a real hatred to our Lord. His father-in-law was Annas.

He answer'd: "Nearer than thou hop'st is laid
A rock, which springing from the mighty sphere,
Spans like a bridge across each darken'd glade, 135
Save that 'tis rent and does not close it here;
And by the ruins you may well ascend
Its sloping sides that from the bottom rear."
My Lord awhile his head did downward bend,
Then cried: "The fiend who 'gainst yon sinners
plies 140
His hook, did falsely of our toils portend."
"Much of the Devil's sins," the monk replies,
"Bologna⁷ taught me; this amongst the rest:
He is a liar, father unto lies."
Forward with mighty strides my Master press'd, 145
Disturb'd, with anger ling'ring in his look;
And I from those the heavy load distress'd,
The onward path in his dear footmarks took.

⁷ Bologna, the birthplace of the speaker, Catalano, was the great theological school of Italy.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—Virgil raises Dante to the summit of the rock that separates the sixth and seventh pits, and from it they perceive the spirits of robbers chased by poisonous serpents. The awful torment of Vanni Fucci, surnamed the Beast, a native of Pistoja, who lest Dante should rejoice in his misery, prophecies the coming overthrow of the ‘White’ party.

WHAT time the youngling year amongst us stays,
And the sun in Aquarius cools his hairs,
And when the nights decline to half the days;
What time upon the ground the hoar-frost bears
The very image of her sister white, 5
(But brief the season that such plumes she wears,)
The luckless peasant, clad in garments slight,
Rises and looks, and sees the country grow
Whiter around, and on his thigh doth smite;
Home he returns, and wailing to and fro, 10
A wretch not knowing what to do, will pace;
Regaining hope, then forth behold him go,
Perceiving that the world has chang'd its face
In a short hour, he grasps his crook again,
And drives the cattle to the pasture-place: 1
Thus rapidly I felt my courage wane
When so disturb'd my Master's brow appear'd,
But quickly came the balsam for the pain.

For now as to the shatter'd bridge we near'd,
 My Guide turn'd to me with the aspect sweet, 20
 Whereby beneath the hill I erst was cheer'd.
 His arms he op'd after a moment fleet
 Of self-communion, with his earnest gaze
 Bent on the slip, then rais'd me from my feet.
 As one who toiling still his labour weighs 25
 That its result he seemeth to foresee:¹
 Thus to a huge rock's summit did he raise
 Me up, and said, whilst pointing out to me
 Another crag: "To yonder clamber now,
 But prove it first if it can carry thee." 30
 For one becloak'd no path was this, I trow!
 Tho' he was light and push'd me on, we could
 Scarce scramble crag by crag unto the brow.
 And if from where the girding rampart stood
 The slope had not been shorter than before, 35
 Of *him* I speak not—I had been subdued.
 But Malebolge sloping evermore
 Towards the portal of the lowest pit,
 Each deep is so constructed, that one shore
 Rises above, whilst one inclines from, it; 40
 But we at length unto the point attain'd
 Whereat the last rock is asunder split.

¹ Schiller, *Lied von der Glocke*:

"Den schlechten Mann muss man berachten
 Der nie bedacht was er vollbringt."

The breath from out my lungs had been so drain'd
I could no more when on the spot design'd,
But seated me the instant it was gain'd. 45

"Now must thou banish idlesse from thy mind,"
My Master said, "for none attains to fame
On beds of down, 'neath canopies reclin'd ;
Without the which, who life away doth dream,
Leaves on the earth behind him such a track 50
As smoke in air, as bubbles on the stream.

Therefore arise, and conquer this attack
With the high soul that conquers in all fight,
Unless the tardy body drag her back.

A ladder we must scale of greater height ; 55
It boots not of yon Demons to be clear ;
Let my words rouse thee if thou hear'st aright."

Therefore I rose, and made my breath appear
More ample than I felt it at the time,
Crying : " Away ! I'm strong and know not fear !" 60

So up that rock we took our way sublime,
More narrow, rough, and difficult, and eke
Beyond the former pathway hard to climb.

Journeying I talk'd, that I might not seem weak ;
Thereon a voice came from the other fosse, 65
That seem'd unfitted words distinct to speak.

For tho' I stood where spans the rock across
The ditch that yawns there, I knew not the cry,
That seem'd of one whom angry passions toss.

Forward I bended, but no mortal eye
70
 Could for the darkness to the bottom wend;
 Therefore I shouted: "Master, hasten by
This sphere, and let us yonder wall descend;
 Nought I distinguish, tho' I gaze indeed,
 Just as I hear yet cannot comprehend." 75
"No other answer," said he, "than the deed
 Will I bestow; for to an honest quest
 'Tis fitting silent action should succeed."
But we descended from the bridge's crest,
 And where the eighth bank joins with it we stood; 80
 Thence all the cavern was made manifest.
For I beheld within an awful brood
 Of serpents, all with different shapes endow'd,
 That the remembrance curdles yet my blood.
No more let Libya of her sands be proud! 85
 Tho' jaculi, chelydri there be bred,
 Pareas, amphisbæna, cenchris crowd,
She cannot show such venom and such dread
 With all the country of the Ethiop,
 And that beyond the Erythræan spread. 90
Amongst this merciless and woeful group
 Cours'd round a people,² naked, terrified,
 No hope of refuge theirs, no heliotrope.³

² Robbers, whether in the ordinary sense, or peculators in managing the revenues of the state.

³ The heliotrope is a stone supposed to be capable of rendering its possessor invisible at his will.

Their hands behind their backs with snakes were tied,
And thro' their reins the heads and tails were
wound, 95

And in the front the knotted mass I spied.
But lo! on one who tarried near our mound
A serpent sprang, and pierc'd him thro' and thro',
Just where the neck is on the shoulders bound.
Never so quick was written *O* or *U*, 100
As he took fire, and flar'd, and fell away,
And as he fell, his frame to cinders grew.

But when thus crumbled upon earth he lay,
Mix'd of themselves the ashes which had burn'd,
And blended in their former shape straightway. 105

Thus, from illustrious sages we have learn'd,
When its five-hundredth summer was complete
The phoenix died, and then to life return'd.
No corn or herb whilst living will it eat,
Only amomum, tears of frankincense,⁴ 110
And myrrh and spikenard are its winding-sheet.
And as a man who falls, yet knows not whence,
Dragg'd by a Demon's power prostrate lies,
Or oppilation⁵ binding human sense;

⁴ "Who not by corn or herb his life sustains,
But the sweet essence of amomum drains."

DRYDEN'S *Trans. of Ovid's Metamor.*

⁵ The word of the original, and it seems to be good medical English.

Who looks about him when he can arise, 115
 Bewilder'd by the agonizing throes
 He has endur'd, and as he gazes sighs :
Even so that sinner was when he arose ;
 Alas ! alas ! God's justice, how severe,
 That for its vengeance rains such crushing blows ! 120
Then who he was inquir'd my Leader dear ;
 " 'Tis not long since," he answer'd to him, " when
 Tuscany rain'd me in this gulley here.
A beast's life, not a man's, bewitch'd me then,
 Mule as I was ! the Beast Gian Fucci⁶ hight ; 125
 Pistoja whilom was my worthy den."
I spake to Virgil : " Bid him stay his flight ;
 Ask by what sin impell'd he hither came ;
 Living I knew him bloody, full of spite."
He heard, nor feigning to mistake my aim, 130
 Towards me soul and visage did he turn,
 Ting'd with the hues of an unworthy shame.
Then he began : " More deeply do I mourn
 That thou mayst see the wretchedness I bear,
 Than when the other life was from me torn. 135

⁶ A bastard of Fuccio de' Lazzari, a nobleman of Pistoja. In 1293, he committed a robbery in the cathedral of that city, and suffered one Vanni della Monna to be hung for the sacrilege. Pistoja was a stronghold of the Black party, and therefore a 'worthy den' for the Beast, according to Dante.

That which thou seekest I must needs declare ;
Thus deep I'm plung'd because my hand bereft
The sacristy of all its fittings fair,
And charg'd another falsely with the theft.
That of this sight thou nevermore mayst joy 140
When all these murky regions thou hast left,
Open thine ears, and list my prophecy :⁷
Pistoja first shall of her Blacks grow lean—
Florence a newer race and laws shall try—
And Mars is summoning a mist, I ween, 145
From Magra's vale in turbid fogs immers'd,
And with a storm impetuous and keen,
Above Piceno's field the strife shall burst—
Then sudden he shall rend the cloud apart,
And ev'ry stricken White shall feel its worst!—150
I speak, because such bode must wring thy heart."

⁷ The town of Pistoja was the birthplace of the factions of Bianchi and Neri, in 1301, and at first the former expelled their opponents. The Marquis Malaspina was in the Val di Magra, with the exiled Blacks, and was there attacked by the Whites, and bursting through them gained a complete victory at Piceno, a village near Pistoja, and re-entered that city. In the following year the White interest was overthrown in Florence also.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—The snakes put an end to the blasphemies of Fucci, and after meeting Cacus, the Poets behold three spirits, one of whom is at once attacked by a flaming serpent. Another is also stung by a shadow in the form of a snake, and the two are transformed, the spirit to a snake, the snake to a spirit, in a wondrous manner.

THE sinner pausing when his tale was told,
 Forming both figs¹ his hands on high extends,
 Shouting: "At Thee I point them, God—behold!"
 Thence evermore those serpents are my friends,
 For round about his neck there coil'd a snake, 5
 As tho' it said: 'Here thy blaspheming ends.'
 Whilst twisting round, I saw another take
 His arms, and bind them down so close before,
 That neither could the smallest movement make.
 Alas! Pistoja, why delay'st thou more 10
 To turn to ashes, and thine end compel,
 Because thy crimes surpass all crimes of yore?
 Throughout the sable circles of all Hell
 I saw no soul so haught against the Lord,
 Not him² who 'neath the Theban ramparts fell. 15

¹ "A fico for thy friendship!"—SHAKSPERE, *Hen. IV.*

² Capaneus, c. xiv., 46.

the other after the same manner etc.

Sthallo (page)

(see T. 1.)

Away he fled, nor spake another word;
 Whilst came a Centaur³ fill'd with fury's storm,
 Exclaiming: "Where, oh! where is yon abhorr'd?"
 Nor does, I fancy, the Maremma swarm
 So thick with snakes, as from his haunch they spread 20
 To that part where begins the human form.
 Stretch'd from his shoulders, and behind his head,
 A dragon with its wings extended stood,
 And flames on all encount'ring him it shed.
 "Yonder is Cacus," said my Master good, 25
 "Who at the foot of Aventinus' rock,
 Made many a time a stagnant pool of blood.
 He travels not the pathway of his stock
 By reason of that fraudulent robbery, when
 He carried off the mighty neighbour flock. 30
 But all his knavish actions ended then
 When Hercules dealt many a needless stroke,
 Perchance a hundred—scarcely felt he ten!"
 But Cacus vanish'd whilst my Master spoke;
 Three spirits⁴ issued on the ground below, 35
 To which nor Virgil nor myself awoke,

³ Cacus, son of Vulcan and Medusa, stole the cattle of Hercules, who despatched him. He was not a Centaur, although spoken of as one by Virgil, *Æn.* viii. 194:

"The monster Cacus, more than half a beast."—DRYDEN'S *Trans.*

⁴ Agnello Brunelleschi, Buoso degli Abbati, and Puccio Sciancato de' Galigai, all Florentines, who, as robbers of the revenues of the state, undergo greater torments than their peers.

Until they cried: "Who are you? quickly show!"
And therefore we, refraining from discourse,
Did upon those alone our thought bestow.
I knew them not, but things so took their course, 40
As often by strange chances things are sway'd,
That one proclaim'd another's name perforce,
Exclaiming: "Cianfa, whither has he stray'd?"
So, that my Guide might be attentive now,
From chin to nose my forefinger I laid. 45
Oh! Reader, if to that I shall avow
Thou art slow of faith, my wonder 'twill not rouse,
For I who *saw* can scarce its truth allow.
As tow'rds the three I turn'd my lifted brows,
There darted forth a serpent with six claws,⁵ 50
On one of them, and grappled with him close.
Girding his belly with its middle paws,
The foremost pair the sinner's arms restrains,
And of a sudden either cheek it gnaws.
Fix'd on each thigh each hindmost foot remains; 55
Its tail it thrust between them, and behind
It curl'd it upwards, clinging to the reins.
Nor did the clasping ivy ever wind
Around its oak-tree, as this monster keen
About the other's limbs its own entwin'd. 60

⁵ This serpent is Cianfa de' Donati of Florence, one of the family into which Dante married. The other spirits inquire after him in v. 43.

Clinging as close as if their forms had been
Of heated wax, they mingled all their shades,
And neither soon retain'd its former sheen.
Thus from the heat a brownish hue pervades
The paper held above a burning flame, 65
Not black as yet, altho' the whiter fades.
The other two look on, and both exclaim :
" Alas! Agnello, what a change is thine ;
Thou hast not two, nor yet a single frame!"
And now both heads in one alone combine— 70
Again the mingled features of the two
Appear as one, which no man could define.
From four extended limbs two arms there grew,
Whilst thighs and legs, the belly and the waist,
Assum'd such shapes as ne'er met mortal view. 75
Each pristine semblance utterly effac'd,
Neither this weird distortion seem'd, yet both,
And as it was slowly away it pac'd!
And as the lizard, which the dogstar's wrath
Drives from one hedge another hedge to gain, 80
Appears a lightning if it cross your path :
So at the bowels of the other twain
A flaming asp appear'd to me to bound,
Livid and swarthy as a pepper-grain.
And where our nourishment is earliest found 85
Transfixing him, on one of them it leapt,
Then fell stretch'd out before him to the ground.

The pierc'd one star'd, but strictest silence kept;
 Yawning he stood, altho' he stirr'd no limb,
 As fever-stricken, or as tho' he slept.⁶ 90
 He watch'd the serpent, and the serpent him;
 The wound of one, the other's mouth create
 Two vapours dense, and these together swim.
 Of poor Sabellus,⁷ of Nasidius' fate
 Let Lucan evermore to tell refuse, 95
 Heark'ning the startling marvels I relate,
 Transform not Cadmus, nor fair Arethuse,
 To snakes and springs, by thy poetic skill
 My Ovid, tho' I envy not thy Muse;
 For front to front thou never didst instil 100
 Two diff'ring natures, that of both the whole
 Substance should be transmuted at thy will.
 Thus both responded to this strange control:
 Whilst to a fork its tail the serpent rent,
 The wounded spirit folded either sole. 105
 The legs and thighs at once so close cement
 Themselves together, that in briefest space,
 No mark could be detected where they blent.
 The form that one was losing, you might trace
 In the split tail; and as one hide increas'd 110
 In hardness, one was softening apace.

⁶ It is well known that the bite of some of the most poisonous serpents produces an almost instantaneous drowsiness.

⁷ Two soldiers of the army of Cato—LUCAN, b. ix.

Enter'd his arms the armpits of the beast ;
And now the reptile's shortest feet attain
To greater length, as the other's feet decreas'd.
Next interlace the feet most near the train, 115
Shaping that member which a man conceals,
Whilst in the wretch that part is split in twain.
And over both a novel colour steals
Whilst veil'd by vapour, that begets on one
The shooting hair, that from the other peels. 120
The one arose, the other toppled prone ;
Yet unchang'd malice still those eyes bespeak,
'Neath which this change of countenance begun.
The erect one's lineaments its temples seek,
And from the surplus matter there impell'd, 125
The ears burst outward from the level cheek.
That which retir'd not, but its station held,
Form'd of its superfluity the nose,
And in proportion into lips it swell'd.
Forwards the prostrate one his muzzle throws, 130
And into forehead both his ears decrease,
Just as the snails their little horns enclose.
His tongue, which theretofore had been one piece,
Fitted for speech, is cleft—together ran
The other's forks—and lo! the vapours cease! 135
The metamorphos'd monster, once a man,
Departed hissing thro' the valley black—
The other sputtering in its talk began.

Soon turning on him its new-moulded back,
 " As I have done," unto a third it said, 140
 " Buoso shall crawl upon this very track."
Thus then the seventh ballast⁸ I survey'd,
 Changing, re-changing; may such novelty
 Win me my pardon if my pen has stray'd.
For tho' what I beheld confus'd my eye, 145
 Tho' all my soul felt stupefied and strange,
 So privily they could not pass me by
But that Sciancato came within my range;
 And he amongst the three whom first I met
 Was the sole spirit who had known no change; 150
The last,⁹ Gaville, thou art mourning yet.

⁸ The word of the original is 'zavorra,' which means a gravel-pit, and thence the ballast of a ship. Here it seems to imply the foul and worthless contents of the seventh pit. The 'changing, re-changing,' means of men to serpents, and serpents to men, which was for ever going on there.

⁹ That is the serpent who attacked the other two after Agnello's metamorphosis. He is Francesco Guercio Cavalcante, who was killed at Gaville, near Florence. In revenge for his death many of its inhabitants were slain.

THE TWENTY-SIXTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—Dante muses in agony upon the calamities impending over Florence. Arriving at the eighth pit, he sees a vast number of gliding flames. His attention being arrested by one of these, the peak of which is split into two, Virgil informs him that it is the prison of Diomedes and Ulysses, and conjures the latter to narrate the latter part of his life. His story after quitting Ithaca for the last time.

OH! Florence in thy mightiness rejoice!
 Thy wings are waving over sea and land,
 And Hell itself re-echoes to thy voice!
 These five I found among the robber-band,
 Thy citizens, whence shame upon me lay, 5
 Nor shall thy glory by such means expand.
 If men dream truly at the break of day,¹
 Thou shalt endure (even now the hour is near)
 What Prato² and more cities for thee pray.
 Nor were it premature, tho' now 'twere here; 10
 'Tis fated—yet alas! the moment lags;
 More 'twill distress me, as my life grows sere!

¹ In Purg. ix. 16, Dante gives the reason for this superstition; because at that hour the mind is freer from the flesh, and more open to divine visions. In a note to that passage in Le Monnier's edition of 1849, we are reminded, somewhat unpoetically, that digestion is by that time completed.

² A town near Florence. In 1304 a bridge over the Arno gave way when a vast crowd was on it, and a fire destroyed 1700 houses.

We parted thence, and by the shiver'd crags
That form'd the ladder for our late descent,
My Guide remounts, and up my weight he drags. 15
As on our solitary way we went
Where the rough cliff its jutting splinters throw,
The foot without the hand was impotent.
I sorrow'd then, and now I grieve anew,
Revolving in my mind what I descried, 20
And curb my soul more than I'm wont to do,
Lest it career where Virtue will not guide;
What fair stars grant me, or a fairer will,
Let me not grudge myself what these provide!
And as the peasant resting on a hill— 25
About that season when is least conceal'd
His face, whose radiant beams all Nature fill,
When to the gnat the fly begins to yield—
Sees all the vale with hosts of fire-flies bright,
Where he perchance prunes vines, or ploughs the
field: 30
Thus the eighth cavern glisten'd all with light
Of flames innum'rous, as was manifest
Arriving where its chasm came into sight.
As he whose insults raging bears redress'd,
Beheld the chariot of Elijah rise, 35
When towards Heav'n the soaring horses press'd,
But could not closely follow with his eyes,
Or more distinguish than the flame alone,
That, like a cloudlet, mounted to the skies:

Thus thro' the gorge the flickering mov'd on ; 40
Tho' none disclos'd its inner mysteries,
Yet each about a sinner's³ form was thrown.
I gain'd the bridge so eager nought to miss,
That had I not embrac'd a rock, unspurn'd
I must have fallen headlong in the abyss. 45
My Guide, who saw how anxiously I yearn'd,
Began : " Within those flames the spirits dwell ;
Each cloaks himself in that whereby he's burn'd."
" Oh ! Master, as I hear Thee I am well
Convinc'd, tho' I concluded thus," I cried, 50
" And had implor'd Thee to vouchsafe to tell,
Whose is yon flame with summit rent so wide,
That from the Theban pyre it might have leapt,
Where lay the hostile brothers,⁴ side by side."
He answer'd : " Two in torture there are kept ; 55
Therein Ulysses and great Diomede
To vengeance sweep, as once to ire they swept.
Pent in that flame, they must bemoan the deed
Of treachery with the horse,⁵ that portal where
There issued forth the noble Roman seed. 60

³ Those who injured others by fraudulent counsel.

⁴ Eteocles and Polynices. When they were laid upon one funeral pile, the flame darted up in two separate peaks, as though their enmity had not ceased with death.

⁵ The Trojan horse, which led to the capture of Troy, and the migration of Æneas.

They mourn the dead Deïdamia's⁶ care,
For she laments Achilles to this hour;
For the Palladium⁷ torments too they bear."
"If they are able in this sparkling show'r
To speak, I pray, oh! Master, and re-pray, 65
(And may my pray'rs a thousand overpow'r!)
That Thou wilt not deny me some delay,
Till yonder horned flame shall hither swerve;
Towards it see with much desire I sway."
He answer'd: "Truly does thy pray'r deserve 70
The highest praise, and therefore be it so!
But yet from all discourse thy tongue preserve.
Let me address them, for full well I know
What thou desirest, and those Greeks sublime
Might shrink on thee their converse to bestow." 75
So when he deem'd it fitting place and time,
And when the gliding fire before us came,
Then in this wise I heard him shape his rhyme:

⁶ Deïdamia, daughter of Lycomedes, King of Scyros, who bore Pyrrhus to Achilles, who was at her father's court disguised as a woman. Ulysses, in the garb of a merchant, went thither, and offered the pretended damsel her choice of jewels or arms. Upon her choosing the latter, the real sex was discovered, and Achilles was compelled to join the Trojan war.

⁷ The sacred image of Pallas, with which the security of Troy was bound up.

“Twin spirits pent together in one flame,
If whilst I liv’d I merited your praise, 80
If great or little merit I might claim
When in the world I wrote my lofty lays,
Move not! but let one tell, ere you retire,
Whither he went unknown to end his days!”
The taller horn of that most ancient fire, 85
Began to flicker, and it murmured,
Like one on which molesting airs respire;
And waving up and down its lambent head,
As tho’ that were the tongue that shap’d its word,
Cast forth its voice and spake: “When I had fled 90
From Circe, who when, many moons recurr’d,
Spell-bound me still near Caieta to toy,
Before Æneas had that name conferr’d,⁸
Nor my old father’s reverence, nor the boy
I fondly cherish’d, nor the debt of love 95
Which should have crown’d Penelope with joy,
Suffic’d my eager longing to remove
To master knowledge in the world untried,
The vice and virtue of my kind to prove.

⁸ See *Æneid*, vii. 1, translated by Dryden:

“And thou, oh! matron of immortal fame,
Here dying, to the shore hast left thy name;
Cajeta still the place is call’d from thee,
The nurse of great Æneas’ infancy.”

So for the Ocean, unenclos'd and wide, 100
 I started with one ship, and that small train
 Whose constancy would never quit my side.
 Both coasts I saw as far as Fez and Spain,
 And I beheld the Sardinian's island shore,
 And all the others water'd by that main. 105
 I and my comrades had grown weak and hoar,
 When thro' those narrow passages we steer'd,
 Where, that mankind might never pass them more,
 Great Hercules distinct his land-marks rear'd;
 And now upon our right Sevilla set, 110
 And Ceuta on our left had disappear'd.
 'Brothers!⁹ who by a myriad perils met,
 To this far West,' I cried, 'have struggled on,
 For the brief vigil that remaineth yet
 Unto your failing sense, refuse to shun 115
 Experience¹ in this daring enterprise,
 To scan the unpeopled world beyond the sun.

⁹ So Shakspeare says:

"We few, we happy few, we band of brothers!"—*Hen. V.*

¹ This passage will recall Mr. Tennyson's noble 'Ulysses,' to all who have read it:

"Yet all Experience is an arch, wherethro'
 Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
 For ever and for ever when I move."

And ————— "for my purpose holds
 To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
 Of all the western stars until I die."

It is hard to say whether Dante or our own poet has most truly seized the spirit of Homer, in his Appendix to the Odyssey.

Recall the origin wherefrom ye rise ;
To live like beasts ye nevermore were fram'd,
But to pursue where worth or knowledge flies.' 120
And with this little speech I so inflam'd
Their onward courage, that I doubt me now
If even I their ardour could have tam'd.
So from the dawn we turn'd away our prow ;
Our oars grew wings to speed our headstrong
flight, 125
Veering, still veering to the larboard bow.
The stars about the other pole the night
Beheld now, and our own so lowly gloom'd,
Not rising o'er the ocean-floor to sight.
Five times had dwindled, five times been relum'd, 130
The light which underneath the moon is cast,
Since our impetuous course had been resum'd,
When now a mountain broke on us at last
Hazy from distance, nor in all my years
Had I beheld methought a hill so vast. 135
And we rejoic'd, but soon we chang'd to tears,
For from that new-found land a whirlwind surg'd,.
Smiting our galley on her foremost piers.
Thrice round with all the waters she was urg'd—
Yet once again, and high the stern-post rush'd— 140
Then as One listed, was the prow submerg'd,
Till over us the closing waves were hush'd."

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—The flame enwrapping Ulysses now departs, and is soon succeeded by another, containing the spirit of Guido da Montefeltro, to whom Dante briefly narrates the condition of Italy. In return Guido tells the frauds and stratagems he planned, and which doomed him to the fire. The Poets then advance towards the ninth pit.

ALREADY risen up erect, and still
 Against more speech, now pass'd away that flame,
 Having obtain'd my dulcet Bard's goodwill;
 Just as another, following the same,
 Towards its summit made us raise our eyes, 5
 By murmuring confus'd that from it came.
 As the Sicilian bull¹—whose earliest cries
 Sprang from the pangs of him (oh! just award),
 Whose skilful file had shap'd the monstrous size—
 Borrow'd the sufferer's voice and loudly roar'd, 10
 So that altho' it was of brass alone,
 Still it appear'd by the sharp torture gor'd:
 Thus when no outlet or escape was shown
 To quit the fire, into its² language grew
 Slowly transform'd its melancholy moan; 15

¹ The bull of Phalaris, who first tried it on Perillus, its inventor.

² '*Its language*,' that is to say, the confused and unintelligible meaning of that element.

And this, when it had found the avenue,
Rush'd thro' the point, and gave the ceaseless play
The tongue had given it in passing thro'.
"Thou, speaking Lombard," then we heard it say,
"In whose direction now my voice I turn, 20
Who saidst: 'No more from thee I seek, away!'"³
To tarry for some converse do not spurn
Because I come a little while behind;
To tarry grieves not me, albeit I burn.
If thou but now into this valley blind 25
From that fair Latin land above art flung,
To which my heavy sins were all confin'd,
Is war or peace my Romagnuoles among?
Where Tiber from the mountain yoke bursts free,
Between Urbino and the hills I sprung."⁴ 30
Downward with bended head I leant to see,
Whereat my side my Leader gently tapp'd,
Saying: "Speak thou, of Latin race is he."
So I, whose answer was made prompt and apt,
Began without delay: "Oh! thou who art 35
Below, a spirit from our vision wrapt,

³ These are the words in which Virgil gave permission to Ulysses to retire, alluded to in v. 3

⁴ Count Guido da Montefeltro, a native of that town, which stands on a hill between Urbino and the source of the Tiber. The poem gives his history. He died in 1299.

Thine own Romagna in its tyrants' heart
Is not, nor was it ever, free from war,
Tho' none was raging when I left that part.
As long they were, Ravenna's pow'rs still are; 40
There doth the eagle of Polenta⁵ brood,
O'ershading Cervia with its wings spread far.
The country⁶ that the long assault withstood,
And pil'd its French foes in a bloody mound,
Cowers beneath the talons vert subdued. 45
The mastiff old, Verrucchio's younger hound,⁷
Whose ruthless actions laid Montagna low,
Make their fangs wimbles wherewithal to wound.
The towns where Lamo and Santerno⁸ flow
Crouch to the lion of the snowy nest, 50
Who glides, like spring to winter, to and fro.
That town⁹ whose walls the Savio's waves invest,
Even as it lies itself 'twixt plain and mount,
Drags on its life, now free and now oppress'd.

⁵ Guido da Polenta's crest. Cervia is a small town on the coast of the Adriatic.

⁶ Forlì, which in 1282 withstood a long siege by the troops of Pope Martin IV., consisting chiefly of French mercenaries. The 'talons vert' refer to the arms of the Ordelaffi, who had conquered the place.

⁷ The two Malatesta, father and son, Lords of Rimini, called of Verucchio from their castle—Montagna, the head of the Ghibellines of Rimini, was murdered by them.

⁸ Faenza and Imola. The arms of Mainardo Pagani, were a lion azure, on a field argent.

⁹ Cesena.

Now I implore thee thy own state recount; 55
Be not more hard than others—so aton'd
May thy name bravely all the world confront.”
Then when the flame a little while had groan'd
After its fashion, its sharp head did quake
Hither and thither, and its breathings moan'd: 60
“If I believ'd the answer I shall make
Were unto one who yet may earth retread,
My flame should stand erect nor further shake.
But as no living spirit ever fled
From this abyss, if I have heard the truth, 65
I answer, and no infamy I dread.
I turn'd Franciscan, having been in youth
A man-at-arms, thus hoping to amend,
Nor had my fervent hope been balk'd in sooth,
But the Great Pontiff,¹ whom all harm attend! 70
Led me again astray to former ill;
Now mark me by what means, and to what end.
Whilst I inform'd the bones and juices still
My mother gave me, all my acts reveal'd
Less of the lion's than the fox's skill. 75
All policy, all cunning's paths conceal'd
I knew throughout, and so I us'd my pow'r
That to the ends of all the earth it peal'd.

¹ Boniface VIII., who, in 1298, by a pretended friendship, obtained possession of Præneste or Palestrina (v. 102) and then destroyed it. The enemies alluded to (v. 86), near the Lateran, was the noble Roman family Colonna.

But when I felt that I had touch'd the hour
Of life, when ev'ry human creature ought 80
To haul his cable home, his sail to low'r,
Repentance and confession then I sought,
For what had pleas'd me nevermore could please;
Ah! weary wretch, what joy should these have
brought.

But he, the prince of the new Pharisees, 85
Who near the Lateran his battles rang'd—
Hebrew and Moslem, his allies were these!
Only from Christians was his soul estrang'd,
None of his foes at Acre's fall² had been,
None with the Sultan barter'd and exchange'd— 90
He reverenc'd not his own great Charge, I ween,
Nor his high Orders, nor in me that cord³
Wont to make those whom it encircles lean.
As in Soracte Constantine implor'd
Sylvester's⁴ leech-craft for his leprosy, 95
Even so this man besought to be restor'd
From the hot fever of his pride by me;
He sought my counsel, but no sign I made,
His words mere drunken ravings seem'd to be.

² In 1291 the citadel of Acre fell into the power of the Saracens, through the aid of the renegade Christians.

³ The girdle of the Franciscans.

⁴ Sylvester I., Bishop of Rome, in 314. He was Pope at the great Council of Nice, and died in 335. In 326 Constantine is said to have visited him at Mount Soracte, on the Tiber.

Then he began: 'Be not thy heart afraid, 100
For aid' me, and thy ev'ry crime I blot,
That Penestrino in the dust be laid.
I can unlock and lock, as thou dost wot,
The gates of Heaven; so the keys are twain,
The which my predecessor⁵ valued not.' 105
Me did his weighty arguments constrain,
And silence seem'd a yet more dangerous scheme;
'Father,' said I, 'since thou wilt lave the stain
Of sin where I am doom'd to fall, I deem
Fulfilment halting join'd to pledges strong 110
Shall make thee triumph on the Throne Supreme.'
When I was dead St. Francis came ere long
To claim me, but of the Black Cherubim
One shouted: 'Leave him here—do me no wrong!
Amongst my slaves beneath I'll carry him, 115
For he that fraudulent device evolv'd,
Since when for ever round his hairs I swim.
He who repents not cannot be absolv'd—
None can repent yet love the sinful act;
Therein wild contradiction were involv'd.' 120
Ah! miserable me! what shudders rack'd
Me as he clutch'd me, and 'Perchance,' he cried,
'Thou thought'st me not logician so exact!'

⁵ Celestine V. See c. iii., 59.

To Minos I was borne, who round the hide
Of his hard back eight times his tail entwin'd, 125
And biting it with fury he replied:
'For the secreting flame is he design'd!'
Thence as thou seest ever-lost I stray
Enwrapp'd as now, with anguish in my mind."
But when he had concluded thus his say, 130
Twisting and flickering his pointed horn,
The flame despairing slowly went his way.
I and my Master ever onward borne,
Mounting the rock attain'd another mole,
That spans the fosse, where expiating mourn 135
Those who by sowing discords load the soul

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT :—In the ninth cavern the Poets find all fomenters of discord and scandal, whether political or private, who, in retribution for their crimes, have their limbs split, and in some cases severed from their bodies. Amongst these they converse with Mahomet, Mosca, and Bertram of the Borne, Viscount of Hautefort, who, for instigating Prince Henry, the eldest son of King Henry II. of England, to rebellion against his father, has the most terrible punishment of them all.

WHO in unfetter'd language would not fail
 The blood and wounds I witness'd to narrate
 In full, tho' telling o'er and o'er his tale?
 To such a task no tongue were adequate;
 For human language and the human brain 5
 Have small capacity for things so great.
 If all could be assembled once again
 Who weep their life-blood, by the Roman throng
 Pour'd forth upon Apulia's fateful plain;¹
 And those who in that war² protracted long 10
 Pil'd up of knightly rings so huge a spoil—
 As Livy writes, and he is never wrong—

¹ The Epirotes slain in the invasion of Pyrrhus.

² The second Punic war, in which the battle of Cannæ was fought.

And those who did at the keen strokes recoil
Of Robert Guiscard,³ striving 'gainst his claim;
And those whose bones are gather'd in the soil 15
Of Ceperano,⁴ where to lying shame
The Apulians stoop'd, and Tagliacozzo⁵ where
Unarm'd the old Alardo overcame:
And one his mangled limbs, and one should bare
His jagged stumps, all would be nought to shape 20
The grisly horrors of the coming lair!
Never, tho' reft of all its hoops, would gape
A hogshead so, as one⁶ who met my eyes
Riv'n from the chin to where foul winds escape.
The pendant bowels fell between his thighs; 25
Bare lay the pluck and pouch most feculent,
That turns to ordure all the mouth supplies.
He saw that all my sight on him was bent,
And as his hand his yawning bosom rack'd,
He shouted to me: "Mark, how I have rent 30

³ Brother of Richard, Duke of Normandy, conquered Naples in 1071.

⁴ In 1265, the first battle of the war between Manfred, King of Sicily, and Charles of Anjou, was fought at Ceperano, in the Roman Campagna.

⁵ A castle of Calabria, where, by the stratagem of Alardo di Valery, Charles of Anjou gained a decisive victory over Conrad, the nephew of Manfred.

⁶ This is Mahomet.

Myself, and see how Mahomet is hack'd!
And Ali⁷ who precedes me in his woe,
From chin to forelock all his face is crack'd.
All these whom thou beholdest here below,
The seeds of heresy and scandal sow'd 35
When living—therefore are they cloven so.
A devil is behind, whose ruthless goad
Pursues us ever, and his trenchant sword,
Each time that we have trod the dismal road,
Replaces in their order all the horde; 40
Yet ere a second time we pass him by,
The gashes all must be to health restor'd.
Who art thou musing on the rock on high;
Perchance retarding the disastrous lot
Pronounc'd upon thee for thy villany?" 45
"Death hath not raught him,⁸ Sin conducts him not
To any torture," thus my Lord replied;
"But that in him full knowledge be begot,
I, who *am* dead, am chosen for his guide
From sphere to sphere, thorough Hell's lowest ways; 50
'Tis true, as I am speaking at thy side!"
Then tarried in the trench on me to gaze
Above a hundred when this speech they heard,
Forgetting all their anguish in amaze.

⁷ Ali was cousin-german of Mahomet, and married his only daughter Fatima.—W. IRVING'S *Suc. of Mahomet*.

⁸ "The hand of death hath raught him."—*Ant. and Cleop.*

“ Bid Frà Dolcino⁹ be upon his guard—

55

Thou who perchance the sun wilt shortly see—

If in my steps he would not follow hard,

With plenteous food, that to Novara he

Yield not the palm, whilst him deep snows invest;

For else no easy conquest he shall be.”

60

These were the words that Mahomet express’d,

With one foot rais’d for progress, and he left

Us then, as firmly on the ground it press’d.

⁹ Fra’ Dolcino was the head of a sect which called itself the Apostles, and which was established at Parma, in 1260, by Gherardo Sagarelli, who was burnt there in 1300. Papal bulls were issued against them in 1286 and 1290, and in 1305, Dolcino, with between 3000 and 4000 followers, was forced to retreat to the fastnesses of the Valsesia, on the southern slopes of the chain of Monte Rosa. A crusade was preached against the sect, and for two years they defended themselves against the Bishops of Novara and Vercelli. They were at last reduced to the utmost misery, many had died of starvation, and in March, 1307, Dolcino and most of his leading followers were captured. On the 1st of June, Dolcino was barbarously tortured, and then burnt to death at Vercelli. It has been generally asserted that community of goods and of women was his leading doctrine, and that he and his sect separated from the church to indulge unrestrainedly in every excess; but Signor Mariotti has lately written, and in such eloquent and choice English as few can write, a most interesting history of Dolcino, in which he strenuously opposes this view, maintaining that the Popish authors of the time endeavoured thus to make him infamous, but that he was one of the precursors of the Great Reformation. I fear, however, that Dante’s view was different, for he puts the warning into the mouth of the great schismatic Mahomet.

Another shade in whom the throat was cleft,
And all whose nose below the brow was lopp'd, 65
From whom one ear had also been bereft,
With all the others in amazement stopp'd
To stare; of all he op'd his windpipe first,
Whose outer side the crimson colour dropp'd,
Exclaiming: "Thou for no offence accurs'd, 70
Whom I beheld in Latium long ago,
Unless great likeness error may have nurs'd,
Some thoughts on Medicina's¹ son bestow;
Shouldst thou return to view the lovely plain
That from Vercelli slopes to Marcabò,² 75
Do thou reveal to Fano's noblest twain,³
To Guido and to Angiolell, that they,
If here below our foresight be not vain,

¹ Medicina, a town in the Bolognese territory. The speaker is one Pier, a violent political partisan.

² Vercelli, a town on the Alvo, almost upon a line drawn from Turin to Milan. Marcabò is a castle at the mouth of the Po. From Vercelli to the Adriatic, Lombardy is really one unbroken plain.

³ Guido del Cassero, and Angiolello da Cagnano, citizens of Fano, on the Adriatic, near Urbino, were invited to a conference by Malatestino (c. xxvii., 46), tyrant of Rimini. They embarked in a galley he had sent for them, and were seized and flung into the sea in sacks off Cattolica, a headland near Pesaro. The whirlwind of Focara, a hill near Cattolica, was considered very dangerous to seamen. The traitor, with one eye, is Malatestino himself.

Shall from their vessel both be hurl'd away,
 And perish by a bloody tyrant's guile 80
 Sunk in the breakers off Cattolica.
 From Cyprus to the Balearic isle,
 Whether by pirates or an Argive crew,
 Never did Neptune see a deed so vile.
 The traitor with one eye espying, who 85
 Now rules a district, one⁴ not far from hence
 Were glad if it had never fed his view,
 Shall summon both of them to conference,
 And will contrive it that nor pray'r nor vow
 They'll need against Focara for defence." 90
 Then I began: "Clearly point out, if thou
 By me to earth wouldst have thy mem'ry brought,
 Which is that spirit with embitter'd brow."
 Thereat unto the jaws his hand he raught
 Op'ning a comrade's mouth amidst the herd, 95
 Crying: "Behold, and he can utter nought!
 This is the banish'd ruffian who averr'd,
 Scatt'ring the doubts of Cæsar, that an act
 When ripe is ruin'd if it be deferr'd."

⁴ This is Curio, whose advice determined Cæsar to cross the Rubicon.

"Tolle moras, semper nocuit differre paratis."

LUCAN, *Phars.* i. 281.

It is singular that the adviser of the act of Cæsar should be so punished, when Dante must have approved the act itself so highly.

Alas! what craven terrors now distract 100
That Curio, from whose throat the daring tongue
That spake so boldly, clean away was hack'd!
Next one from whom both hands were sever'd, flung
His stumps on high thro' the dark air of Hell,
That daubing blood about his visage hung, 105
And cried: "Let Mosca⁵ in thy mem'ry dwell;
I sow'd for Tuscany an evil seed,
Saying: 'When once completed 'twill be well.'"

⁵ "In 1215 a Guelph noble of the upper Vale of Arno, named Buondelmonte, who had been made a citizen of Florence, demanded in marriage a young person of the house of Amidei, and was accepted. While the nuptials were in preparation a lady of the family Donati stopped Buondelmonte as he passed her door, and bringing him into the room where her women were at work, raised the veil of her daughter, whose beauty was exquisite. 'Here,' said she, 'is the wife I had reserved for thee; like thee she is Guelph, whilst thou takest one from the enemies of thy church and race.' Buondelmonte, dazzled and enamoured, instantly accepted the proffered hand. The Amidei looked upon his inconstancy as a deep affront; all the noble Ghibelline families of Florence, about twenty-four in number, met, and agreed that he should atone with his life for the offence. Buondelmonte was attacked on the morning of Easter Sunday, just as he had passed the Ponte Vecchio on horseback, and killed at the foot of the statue of Mars, which still stood there. Forty-two families of the Guelph party met and swore to avenge him, and blood did indeed atone for blood. Every day some new murder, some new battle alarmed Florence, for the space of thirty-three years."

SISMONDI'S *Ital. Rep.*

Mosca degli Uberti was one of the Ghibelline conspirators, and is said to have used the words of the text: "capo ha cosa fatta."

“Yes!” I exclaim’d, “and death to all thy breed;”
So heaping sorrow upon sorrow’s head, 110
He pass’d, a spirit sad and faint indeed.
Still with the passing crowds mine eyes I fed,
And then beheld what without proof secure
To tell alone would make me thrill with dread,
But quiet conscience will my strength ensure, 115
Strong siding champion!⁶ making ever bold
The man whose breastplate is a bosom pure.
Truly I saw, and even now behold,
A bust all headless that before us pass’d,
As pass’d the others of that woeful fold. 120
It by the hairs its sever’d head held fast,
Swinging it like a lantern, and it cried:
“Ah! woe is me!” with eyes towards us cast.
Itself did for itself the light provide;
Two forms in one, one form in two appear’d— 125
He who so rul’d knows how it could betide!
But pausing upright soon as it had near’d
The bridge’s foot, that we no word might miss,
Nearer its arm with all its head it rear’d,
Saying: “Oh! thou who breath’st in this abyss 130
To view the dead, my whelming torments trace,
Behold if any torment be like this!

⁶ “The virtuous mind that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion, Conscience.”—*Comus*.

That thou mayst bear my story from this place,
Learn I am Bertram of the Borne,⁷ the one
Who cheering the Young King with counsel base, 135
Arous'd to mutual warfare sire and son.
Ahitophel's curs'd goadings did not win
To greater woe David and Absolon.⁸
Because I sever'd those so close akin,
Sever'd I bear my miserable skull 140
From the poor trunk which is its origin.
Thus even in me is retribution⁹ full."

⁷ King Henry II. of England associated his eldest son with himself in the government, and caused him to be actually crowned at Winchester, in 1170, and at Rouen in 1173. (Hume, vol i. p. 367 and 388.) Hence he is sometimes called the Young King. Bertram, Viscount of Hautefort, was his tutor and counsellor in his revolt against his father.

⁸ 2 Sam. xvi. and xvii.

⁹ "Lo contrapasso—lex talionis."

THE TWENTY-NINTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—Lingering still upon the rock uniting the ninth to the last pit, Dante perceives a kinsman of his own; but Virgil reproves him for his delay, and leads him to the summit, whence he beholds the miserable crew of forgers and falsifiers of all kinds. In this canto he treats of Alchemists, and amongst them sees and converses with Griffolino and Capocchio.

THE varied wounds, the hosts together brought,
 Did so intoxicate mine eyes with woe,
 That to remain and weep was all they sought;
 But Virgil cried: "Why art thou staring so?
 Why is thy vision thus for ever weigh'd 5
 Down by the hapless, mangled ghosts below?
 Thou didst not thus in any other grade;
 Reflect, if all these shadows thou wouldst mete,
 That two-and-twenty miles extends this glade.
 The moon already sails beneath our feet;¹ 10
 Towards its end the time vouchsaf'd us draws,
 Yet more remains to see than thou canst weet."
 "If Thou hadst only listen'd to the cause,"
 I answer'd quickly, "why I bent my ken
 Beneath, Thou mightst have granted further
 pause." 15

¹ It is now noon; the moon is at her lowest point. Thirty-six hours have passed since the dawn, c. i., 37.

I follow'd quickly, for my Master then
Half went, half tarried, as I still pursued
My answer, adding: "Deep in yonder den
Whereon mine eyes were so intently glued,
Methought I heard one of my blood² bemoan 20
The sin which here is so severely rued."
"Preserve henceforth for ever 'gainst that one
A soul unbroken," Virgil then replied;
"Listen to something else—let him alone.
For at the little bridge's foot I spied 25
Him point his finger threat'ningly at thee;
Geri del Bello was his name they cried.
But thou just then wast busied earnestly
With him³ who govern'd Hautefort's citadel,
And he had vanish'd ere thou turn'dst to see." 30
"Master, the violence by which he fell,"
I answer'd, "which is unaveng'd even now
By the partakers of his shame, may well
Make him disdainful to us; thus I trow
Did he in silence from our presence sweep, 35
Therefore I feel compassion for him grow."
Discoursing thus we mounted to the steep
Which would have shown us, had there been more light,
The other valley to its deepest deep.

² Geri del Bello, brother of Cione Alighieri. He was murdered by one of the Sacchetti, but none of his kindred avenged him.

³ Bertram of the Borne.

But when we stood upon the cloister'd height, 40
The last in Malebolge, that which shows
All its fraternity unto our sight,
Then was I stricken by the varied woes,
And pity's steel-barb'd shafts on me did fall,
So that my hands were fain mine ears to close. 45
If from July unto September all
The sores of Sardia and Maremma dank,
And all from Valdichiana's⁴ hospital,
Could be heap'd up together in one tank:
'Twere like this cavern—and as pours around 50
The stench of gangren'd members, thus it stank.
But we descended by the furthest mound
Of the long rock leftwards, whence I explor'd
With livelier eyesight all the gulf profound,
Where faultless Justice, handmaid of the Lord 55
Most Highest, deals her chastisement severe
To all the forgers⁵ writ on her record.
Never, methinks, was sadder sight than here!
Not even of Ægina's healthless kind,⁶
When such infection fill'd the atmosphere 60
That to the tiny worm all creatures pin'd;
And those of old the isle inhabiting,
(For such averments in the poets we find,)

⁴ The valley of the river Chiana, near Arezzo.

⁵ Alchemists ; counterfeiterers of precious metals.

⁶ When Ægina had been devastated by pestilence, Zeus, at the prayer of Æacus the king, populated the island from ants' seed.

Did once again from seed of emmets spring :
Than was the vision in this vale of shade, 65
Of souls in diff'rent hillocks languishing.
One right athwart another's back was laid—
One o'er his chest—and thro' the woeful way
A crawling wretch sought out some other glade.
Proceeding step by step nought did we say, 70
With eyes and ears on that unwholesome state,
For none could raise his body whence he lay.
Two lepers propp'd against each other sate,
As heating pans are 'gainst each other set,
From head to heel with ulcers maculate. 75
I never saw such curry-combing yet,
Even by a groom for whom his master waits,
Nor yet by one whom lengthen'd watchings fret :
As each of these his rasping talons grates
Upon himself, with eagerness to quell 80
The itch, which nothing else alleviates.
Beneath the nails the scabby fragments fell,
As from the bream the knife scrapes off the scales,
Or from some fish whose scales are broader still.
“ Oh! thou whose talon thy own self unmails,” 85
’Twas thus my Guide to one⁷ of them begun,
“ Turning to pincers oftentimes thy nails,

⁷ This is Griffolino of Arezzo, who was burnt as a sorcerer by the Bishop of Sienna, upon the entreaty of Albert, the Bishop's supposed son.

Tell if below be prison'd any son
Of Italy; so may thy nails withstand
Eternally the work thou art upon!" 90
"Both whom thou seest are of Latin land,"
He answer'd weeping, "both tormented so;
But who art thou, who makest this demand?"
Then spake my Guide: "One who will downward go,
Leading this living man from breach to breach, 95
To him all Hell I do intend to show."
Then burst the stay which each had furnish'd each;
Trembling they turn'd towards me, with the rest
To whom the echoed syllables could reach.
My gentle Master all his soul address'd 100
Towards me, crying: "What thou wishest, say!"
He turn'd aside, and I began my hest:
"So in the earlier world may no decay
Your memories from men's recollection steal,
So may they live, when suns have roll'd away, 105
As you your state and origin reveal;
Let not your pangs, tho' loathsome and malign,
Fright you your true condition to conceal."
"I perish'd in the flames, an Aretine,
As Albert of Sienna will'd," one spoke; 110
"Not for the sin that caus'd my death I pine.
'Tis true I told him, speaking but in joke,
That I could wing the air; and his desire,
Small-witted and most curious wretch! awoke

To learn my magic, but I made no flyer 115
 Of him—and therefore one who as his child
 Lov'd him was led to doom me to the fire.
 But 'tis for Alchemy that I'm exil'd,
 Practis'd on earth, into this last abyss
 By Minos; he can never be beguil'd." 120
 Then I address'd my Poet: "Say, where is
 A people like Sienna's void of sense?
 French folly truly falleth short of this!"
 Quickly that other leper⁸ did commence,
 For he had heard me: "Save Lo Stricca⁹—he 125
 Was surely moderate in his expense!
 And Niccolò, whose pamper'd luxury
 First found the spices in that garden where
 Such seed as that strikes root so easily.
 The crew¹ with whom Asciano did not spare 130
 His vines and leavy woods—except we these!
 And Abbagliato, sage beyond compare!

⁸ This is Capocchio, himself a Siennese. He is said to have studied natural philosophy with Dante.

⁹ All these exceptions are ironical. Lo Stricca was a spendthrift of Sienna. Niccolò de' Bonsignori first used cloves in cookery, which were then very dear. The 'garden' is, of course, Sienna.

¹ A company of young men was found in Sienna, who converted all their possessions into money, and having thus amassed some 200,000 ducats, squandered it in a very few months. Caccia di Asciano was one, and Abbagliato is supposed to have been another, although some take the last not to be a name, but the participle of '*abbagliare*, to dazzle.'

That thou mayst know who 'gainst the Siennese
Seconds thee warmly, strain thy sharpest view
Until thine eye my visage plainly sees;
Then thou shalt know Capocchio's spirit, who
By Alchemy alloy'd the precious ores,
And shalt remember, if mine eyes be true,
How skill'd I was in aping Nature's stores."

135

THE THIRTIETH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—Two demons come gambolling upon Capocchio and Griffolino, whilst they are still conversing with the Poets. The latter explains who they are, and Virgil passes on amongst coiners, who are bloated with dropsy. Potiphar's wife, and Sinon the Greek; Master Adamo of Brescia, the coiner, falls out with Sinon. Dante's desire to hear their quarrel is rebuked by Virgil.

WHEN deadly wrath in Juno's bosom glow'd
Against all Theban blood for Cadmus' child,¹
As once and yet again she clearly show'd,
Then Athamas with frenzy grew so wild,
That sudden when he saw his consort bear, 5
Laden on either hand, her children mild,
He shouted: "Let us spread our nets to snare
Here in the pass the lioness and young!"
And with his hands grown furious to tear,
Seiz'd one yclept Learchus, and he swung 10
Him round against a stone with ruthless dash,
Whilst with the other to the sea she sprung:

¹ Semele who roused the jealousy of Juno. The wife of King Athamas was Ino, another daughter of Cadmus. Her other child was named Melicerta.

Thus too when Troy, the arrogant and rash,
Was overthrown by Fortune, and its king
Fell with his kingdom in one mighty crash, 15
The captive Hecuba, sad, sorrowing,
When she, ah ! hapless mother, by the main
Beheld her Polydorus perishing,
And saw that fair Polyxena was slain,
Bark'd like a dog, the sheer-distracted Queen, 20
So could that agony pervert her brain:
But ne'er in Troy or Thebes have Furies been
Pursuing any prey so ruthlessly,
Or urging even brutes with goadings keen,
As now two wan and naked souls² cours'd by 25
Gnashing their fangs, and running as one seeth
A hog when rushing to the closing sty.
One reach'd Capocchio and plung'd his teeth
Into his neck, and dragg'd his paunch along
So that it scrubb'd the rugged floor beneath. 30
The Aretine stood by with shudd'ring strong,
And said: "That lightsome imp is Schicchi³ hight;
Thus his mad gambols do his fellows wrong."

² Those who assumed the persons of others.

³ Gianni Schicchi, of the Florentine family Cavalcante. When Buoso Donati was dead, Simon, a relation, employed Schicchi to personate him, and to make a will bequeathing to Simon a wonderful mare, called "La Donna della Torma—the Lady of the Herd."

"If thou wouldst have thy back escape the bite
Of yonder shade," I spake, "grudge not the
pain 35

To say who 'tis before it leaps from sight."

"It is the ancient soul," he spake again,
"Of Myrrha⁴ the unholy, whose desire
Strove beyond right her father's love to gain.

Thus she accomplish'd sin with her own sire, 40
Deceptious in another's form disguis'd;
Even as he, whom there we see retire,
To gain the 'Lady of the Herd' he priz'd,
Made of himself Donati's counterfeit,
And trick'd in law-forms a forg'd will devis'd." 45

Now when those raving ghosts had vanish'd fleet,
Towards the which I had address'd mine eyes,
I turn'd them backward wretches new⁵ to meet,
And one⁶ I saw shap'd in a cithern's guise,
Had but the groin been sunder'd clear in him 50
Above the branching of the human thighs.

⁴ Myrrha, daughter of Cinyras, king of Cyprus. When her father discovered the horrible crime, he attempted to stab her, but she fled into Libya, and was changed into the myrrh-tree.

⁵ Coiners.

⁶ A criminal of Brescia, burnt for coining in 1280. He was induced to do so by Guido, Alessandro, and Aghinolfo, Counts of Romena.

Dull dropsy disproportioning each limb,
Corrupting all as its base humours start
That with the face the belly is not trim,
Compell'd this wretch to keep his lips apart ; 55
Just as a hectic sufferer, who from thirst
One tow'rds his chin and one will upwards dart.
"Oh! ye, who by no penalty accurs'd
Traverse this woful world, I know not why,
Listen and scan intently," from him burst, 60
"Master Adamo's utter misery!
Living of all I would I had my fill—
Now for one drop of water, ah! I sigh.
The rivulets that from the verdant hill
Of Casentino to the Arno flow, 65
And cool and soothe the channels where they trill,
Are still before me—nor in vain 'tis so;
More than the tortures which unflesh my face,
My soul is parch'd by this imagin'd show.
Thus by stern justice holding me in chase, 70
The spot where I offended is employ'd
To urge my sighings to a sharper pace.
There stands Romena, there where I alloy'd
The coin⁷ that bears the image of St. John;
Hence lies my frame above, by flames destroy'd 75

⁷ The gold florin of Florence, whose patron was the Baptist,
c. xiii., 143.

But might I here behold three spirits wan,
Guido, Alessandro, and their brother too,
More joy 'twere than if Branda⁸ were my own.
One lies within,⁹ if what I hear be true
From all the frenzied shadows coursing round ; 80
What boots it me, fast-bound in ev'ry thew?
But if I were so light that I could bound
One single inch in full a hundred years,
The path to him already I had found
And track'd him out amongst my bloated peers ; 85
Yes, tho' eleven leagues extends this place
In length, nor less than half its width appears.
Thro' them I'm sentenc'd with this shapeless race,
Because by them I was induc'd to mould
Florins, whereof three carats'-weight was base." 90
Then I: "The names of yonder twain unfold
Who press upon thy right ; it seems each soul
Smokes like a bathing hand in winter's cold."
"I found them when I rain'd into this hole,"
He said ; "they have not turn'd, and as I
deem 95
They never will, whilst all the ages roll.

⁸ A fountain in the Castle of Romena.

⁹ It does not appear which of the Counts of Romena is condemned. The other two were not then dead.

This the false Greek,¹ who plann'd the Trojan scheme;
That² the false charge against pure Joseph brought;
Their raging fevers breathe that noxious steam."
But one of them in whom resentment wrought 100
To hear his name in slighting accents spoke,
With his clench'd fist his tighten'd belly smote,
Wherefrom, as 'twere a drum, a sound awoke;
But with his own arm, not a whit less hard,
Adamo dealt his face a heavy stroke, 105
Exclaiming: "Tho' 'tis true I am debarr'd
From motion, for my limbs are sorely weigh'd,
For use like this my arm is still prepar'd."
"When to the flames thou wentest," Sinon said,
"Less speed was thine than now thy limbs en-
dueth; 110
But they were readiest for the coiner's trade."
The dropsied answer'd: "Now thou speakest sooth;
Thine evidence was not such truthfulness
Once, when in Troy they sought from thee the
truth."
"If I spake false, thou coinedst false no less," 115
Said Sinon; "one cheat doometh me, but all
The other fiends fall short of thy excess."

¹ Sinon, who persuaded the Trojans to draw the wooden horse within their gates.

² Potiphar's wife.

“ Recall, thou soul forsworn, the horse recall !”

The one with puffing belly then replies ;

“ The world well knows it—be this thought thy
gall !” 120

“ Be thine,” he said, “ the scorching thirst which
dries

Thy cracking frame and tongue ! the rotting juice,
Which bloats thy belly till it dams thine eyes.”

The coiner answer’d : “ Still for all abuse

Thy mouth is gaping, as ’twas ever wont ; 125

What tho’ I thirst ? *me* watery humours sluice ;

But *thou* hast parchings, and an aching front ;

And mightst thou lick Narcissus’ mirror clear

No pressing invitation wouldst thou want !”

Whilst still my faculties were bent to hear, 130

“ Beware !” my Master cried, addressing me,

“ A little further, and a quarrel’s near.”

But hearing that he spake thus angrily,

I turn’d towards him with a shame so hot,

That now ’tis whirling in my memory. 135

Like one who dreams his own unhappy lot,

Who, really dreaming, wishes ’twere a dream,

Longing for that which *is*, as tho’ ’twere *not* :

Such in my lack of utterance did I seem—

Eager to make excuse, and tho’ the while 140

I did so, that I did so could not deem.

“Less shame will wash away offence more vile
Than thine has been,” my gentle Lord replied;
“Therefore unload thy spirit of its coil.

If it should chance that Fortune ever guide 145

Thy steps again where such base wranglings rage,
Remember I am ever at thy side;
Such strife can low desire alone engage.”

THE THIRTY-FIRST CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT:—Upon the confines of the last cavern of the eighth circle, the Poets find the Giants and Titans set in the gulf which separates the two, with half their bodies above the water. After seeing Nimrod, Ephialtes, and Antæus, Virgil conjures the last to bend forward to the ninth circle, and to place himself and Dante there. With this request the Titan complies, and the Poets stand in the circle of Lucifer himself.

WHILST yet upon my cheek the crimson glow'd,
The self-same tongue which had so sharply
spurr'd

Swiftly the healing medicine bestow'd.

'Twas thus Achilles spear,¹ as I have heard,
That spear which erst his father had possess'd, 5
First struck the blow, and then the balm conferr'd.

We turn'd our backs upon that vale unblest,
And traversing the bank that belts it round,
In silence all unbroken on we press'd.
Here less than night, and less than day was found, 10
So that my eyesight could outstrip my course
But little, when I heard a horn resound

¹ "That gold must round engirt these brows of mine,
Whose smile and frown—like to Achilles' spear
Is able with the change to kill and cure."

2nd pt. K. Hen. VI., a. 5, sc. 1.

So loudly 'twould have render'd thunder hoarse ;
And tracking back the line on which it pass'd
Mine eyes were drawn upon one point perforce. 15
When Charlemain's sublime emprise o'ercast
Upon the dismal Roncesvalles² lay,
Orlando winded not so dread a blast!
But scarcely was my head inclin'd that way
When what appear'd huge towers met my glance, 20
Thence I: "What is this district, Master, say."
He spake: "Because thy vision must advance
Too great a distance thro' the darken'd space,
Thy fancy has misled thee now perchance.
Thyself shalt see when we have gain'd the place 25
That distance thoroughly the sense undoeth ;
So prick thyself into a swifter pace."
Then seizing on my hand with tender ruth,
He said: "Ere we proceed I'd have thee know,
That the reality seem less uncouth, 30
Those are not tow'rs but giants, and below
Even from the navel downwards they abide
Deep in the gulf which round this bank doth flow."
As when the melting mists asunder glide,
And one by one the eye re-moulds and sees 35
The objects which the air-drawn vapours hide:

² After the loss of 30,000 men at Roncesvalles, Charlemagne abandoned his hope of expelling the Moors from Spain. The blast of Orlando's magical horn was heard twenty miles off.

So as we near the shore by slow degrees,
And as the gross and murky airs we stem,
Awe overcometh me, and error flees.
As Montereccion³ wears a diadem 40
Of turrets o'er its circling parapet:
Thus in the waters which this summit hem
With half their bodies stretching out, are set
Tow'r-like the awful Titans, whom, when storms
The thunder, from his Heav'n Jove threatens yet. 45
The face, neck, chest of one⁴ amid these forms
And great part of his belly on me rose,
And stretching down along the ribs his arms.
Herein did Nature wisdom rare disclose,
Letting the breed of horrid monsters fail, 50
Depriving Mars of agents such as those;
Albeit of the elephant and whale
She may repent not, he who weighs her gist,
Will see her skill and justice here prevail;
For when the faculties of mind assist 55
A foul intention and a brutal might,
'Tis vain for any nation to resist.
His countenance appear'd in breadth and height
To match the pine upon St. Peter's fane;⁵
His other bones were in proportion right. 60

³ A castle near Sienna.

⁴ This is Nimrod, who designed to build the Tower of Babel.
V. 67 are his inarticulate ravings. *Gen.* x. and xi.

⁵ The pine-apple of bronze, now in the Pope's garden at Rome.

So that the shore which girdled him amain
Below his middle, left his body bare
So much above, that it had been in vain
Had three tall Frisians strain'd to touch his hair;
For upward thirty broad palms could I see 65
To where men buckle close the cloak they wear.
"Rarèl—mai—amèch—zabì—almi—"
Thus that ferocious mouth began to roar,
Ill fitted to a softer psalmody.
Spake Virgil: "Soul distraught, for evermore 70
Stick to thy horn, and therewith soothe thy
mind,
If wrath or other passion rack thee sore.
Search in thy neck, and thou the cord shalt find
That slings it to thee, oh! thou soul confus'd;
About thy brawny chest behold it wind." 75
To me then: "He is of himself accus'd;
'Tis Nimrod, of that evil plan from whence
On earth one single language is not us'd.
To speak were bootless; let us hasten hence,
Because to him all languages of men 80
Seem, like his own to others, void of sense."
Then on we journied to the left agen,
And at about a crossbow-shot we find
A spirit⁶ huger, fiercer to the ken.

⁶ Ephialtes, son of Neptune, who grew nine inches every month.

I know not who the master was could bind 85
This monster fast, but his left arm was chain'd
Before his body, and his right behind,
And both by heavy fetters were restrain'd;
And downwards from the neck five times begirt
Was all that part which o'er the gulf remain'd. 90
"This haughty spirit ventur'd to exert
His giant strength against Almighty Jove,"
Said Virgil; "now he meets with his desert.
'Tis Ephialtes; mighty did he prove
What time the Giants all the Gods dismay'd; 95
The arms he plied, he nevermore shall move!"
"If it might be," I answer'd, "I had pray'd
That of Briareus the Measureless⁷
Experience to mine eyes might be convey'd."
"Antæus⁸ thou shalt see, who can express 100
Himself in words, and stands unshackled near;
He shall convey us to sin's last recess.
The one thou wouldst behold is far from here;
He is in chains, and like this shade in make,
Save that his looks more savage yet appear." 105

⁷ Briareus of the hundred hands, son of Coelus and Terra. See *Æn.* x., 753, of Dryden's translation.

⁸ Famed for his mortal struggle with Hercules, who finding that new strength was infused into him every time he touched his mother the Earth, at last raised him in his arms and squeezed him to death. V. 132 alludes to this combat.

And never did an awful earthquake shake
 With such resistless force a tower tall,
 As Ephialtes now began to quake.
 Then more than all did death my heart appal;
 Nor had it needed aught beyond the dread, 110
 Had I not seen what gyves held him in thrall.
 Thence still advancing on our way we sped
 Towards Antæus, who for full five ells
 Protruded from the cave, besides his head.
 "Oh! thou who in the Fortune-dealing dells," 115
 Where Hannibal with all his host gave way,
 Whence Scipio's heritage of glory swells,
 Borest a thousand lions for thy prey,
 And hadst thou join'd thy brothers' daring war
 Then Terra's sons had conquer'd in the fray, 120
 (For such mankind believes thy powers are,)
 Beneath in that abyss deposit us,
 Where frosts the current of Cocytus¹ bar!
 To Typhon send us not, nor Tityus;
 This man can give thee what you deem most
 worth, 125
 Then stoop, nor curl thy lip contemptuous.

⁹ The vale of Zama, near Carthage, where Scipio conquered Hannibal, earned his surname Africanus, and closed the Second Punic War, B.C. 202.

¹ Cocytus is the frozen pool of the ninth circle; c. xiv., 119.

He can revive thy fame upon the earth;
He lives and looks for length of days indeed,
Unless before his time Grace call him forth.”
Thus spake my gentle Master, and with speed 130
He caught my Leader in the spreading clasp
Wherefrom Alcides underwent sore need.
Then Virgil shouted when he felt his grasp:
“Hither! that I may seize that frame of thine!”
Now as one burthen he could both enclasp. 135
As Carisenda² seemeth to the eyne
Beneath its slope, whilst a light cloud is stream’d
Athwart it, contrary to its incline:
Such as I gaz’d Antæus I esteem’d
Whilst stooping down, and gladly I had sought 140
Some other path, so terrible he seem’d.
But lightly both to that abyss he brought
That Satan and Iscariot devours;
Nor having bended did he tarry aught,
But rose, as in a ship the mainmast tow’rs. 145

² A leaning tower in Bologna. What can be more true than this simile? You would really think the tower bending down.

THE THIRTY-SECOND CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT :—Awed by the terrible nature of his task, Dante again invokes the aid of the Muses, and when he proceeds finds sinners buried in solid ice up to their necks. Who they are. The place is called Caïna. Thence the Poets enter the second compartment, called Antenora, of those who betrayed their party. On quitting this, Dante's steps are arrested by seeing two shadows, one of whom is devouring the head of the other. He conjures one of them to tell their story.

IF I those rough and rugged rhymes might hope
 That would befit this cavern of distress,
 O'er which all other circles form the cope,
 The essence of my thought I would express
 More fully yet—but such I may not claim, 5
 So I approach my theme with fearfulness.
 For never may a trifler-spirit aim
 To paint the bottom of the Universe,
 Nor can it be a lispin'g babbler's game.
 But may those gentle maids assist my verse 10
 Who help'd Amphion Thebæ's walls to rear,
 That in fit style these truths I may rehearse !
 Oh ! race, most ill-begotten ! standing here,
 Plung'd in a spot whereof 'tis hard to tell,
 Happy had ev'ry one been hog or steer ! 15

Now having gain'd that gloomy gulf¹ of Hell,
Far lower than the Giants' feet were sped,
Whilst still mine eyes on its high rampart dwell,
I heard a voice exclaim: "Look where you tread;
Be careful lest your spurning footsteps beat 20
Some hapless and exhausted sinner's head."
Thereat I turn'd, and saw before my feet
A spreading lake, that, from the frozen rime,
Was liker far to glass than to a sheet
Of water; Ister in the winter-time 25
Ne'er wrapp'd his current in a veil so thick,
Nor Tanaïs beneath his freezing clime,
As here we found; for if huge Tabernicch,²
Or Pietrapana fell on its expanse,
Its margin even would not utter '*crick*.' 30
As from a pond frogs oftentimes advance
Their snouts to croak, when of the gleaner's work
The peasant-maiden dreams: so to the glance
All livid, to that part where shame doth lurk,
In ice the woful sinners stood plung'd fast, 35
Clashing their teeth in music like the stork.

¹ The last circle is divided into four compartments; this is the first, and it is called Caïna, after the first murderer, and is devoted to those who have betrayed their kindred to death.

² A mountain in Sclavonia. Pietrapana is a mountain of the Apennine chain.

As thus the shadows stood with looks downcast
Their mouths evinc'd the cold, and from their eyes
The witness of their spirits' anguish pass'd.
Awhile my vision round about me flies, 40
Till at my feet I saw two souls³ so press'd
Together, that their hair commingled lies.
"Tell who you are," I cried, "oh! pair with breast
So closely pack'd." Whereon their necks they bent,
And when their eyesight was to me address'd, 45
Their eyes, till then within alone besprent,
Dropp'd tears upon their lips, and the sharp cold
Froze and restrain'd them where they first were sent.
No grappling iron could two timbers hold
So tight; hence butting like two rams they came 50
Together, by such raging ire controll'd.
Now one⁴ still gazing down I heard exclaim,
From whom both ears the cutting frost had ta'en:
"Why dost thou mirror upon us thy frame?
Who those two are if thou wouldst ascertain, 55
That vale whence erst Bisenzio is inclin'd
Was first their father's, then their own domain.

³ Alexander and Napoleone degli Alberti, Lords of Falterona, where the Bisenzio, a tributary of the Arno, takes its rise. After their father's death, disputes as to the inheritance arose between them, and they killed each other.

⁴ The speaker is Camicione dei Pazzi, who treacherously killed his kinsman Uberto.

Both issued from one womb; nor wilt thou find,
Tho' thou shouldst search Caïna to and fro,
One worthier for gelatine to bind. 60
Not he,⁵ whose chest and shadow at one blow
Of Arthur's hand were sunder'd—not even he;
Not Focaccia;⁶ not he who shades me so
With his huge head, that nought beyond I see,
Whose name on earth was Sassol Mascheron;⁷ 65
Thou know'st him if thou com'st from Tuscany.
To spare me further parley, be it known
I wait Carlino⁸ who shall purge my sin,
For I myself was once Camicion.”
I saw a thousand faces with a grin 70
Doggish from freezing; whence a frozen lake
Makes, and will make my spirit quail within.
Towards the centre as our way we make,⁹
To which all heavy matters gravitate,
And whilst at this eternal chill I shake, 75

⁵ King Arthur discovered the treason of his son Mordrec against himself, and pierced him with his lance so that the sun shone through the wound, and his shadow was sundered.

⁶ Focaccia de' Cancellieri of Pistoja, who struck off his cousin's right hand and slew his uncle, which was the origin of the Black and White factions in 1300.

⁷ A Florentine, who assassinated his uncle. He was beheaded in Florence.

⁸ Carlino dei Pazzi, a Bianco, who betrayed the Castle of Piano di Trevigne to the Florentines in 1302, which led to great slaughter.

⁹ We are now in the second compartment, those who betrayed

If it was Will, or accident, or fate

I know not, but as thro' the heads we hied,

My foot smote hard the visage of one pate.¹

"Why dost thou spurn me?" weepingly it cried;

"Wherefore molest me, unless some increase 80

Of Mont' Aperti's vengeance it betide?"

"That one amongst my doubts may know surcease

Thro' him," I said, "await me here, oh! Lord;

Henceforth I'll hasten on as Thou shalt please."

My Leader halted, and to him who roar'd 85

Loud blasphemies against me, I began:

"Why is thy angry spirit thus outpour'd?"

"Nay, rather who thro' Antenora ran,

Smiting his fellows on the cheek so hard,

That 'twere too much had I been living man?" 90

"I am alive—if fame thou dost regard,

These tidings may rejoice thee," I return,

"For then thy name with others I may guard."

"No!" he replied, "for the reverse I yearn;

Avaunt! nor vex me further; in this bed 95

The flatt'rer's art is difficult to learn."

their country or party, which is called Antenora, from the Trojan Antenor, who is said to have sold Troy to the Greeks.

¹ Bocca degli Abbati of Florence, whose treachery in cutting off the hand of the standard-bearer of his own party during the battle of Mont' Aperti, led to the loss of that battle and the slaughter of 4000 Guelphs.

Then clutching at the summit of his head,

“Thou shalt reveal thy name, or not one hair

Upon thy crown shall long remain,” I said.

He spoke: “Because my tresses thou dost tear, 100

Tho’ on my head a thousand times thou bound,

I will not tell it thee or aught declare.”

Already round my hand his locks were wound,

And many a bunch was rooted up, I trow,

He bark’d meanwhile with eyes upon the ground, 105

When one exclaim’d: “Why, Bocca, what hast
thou?

To clatter with thy jaws contents thee nought,

But must thou bark? What devil’s at thee now?”

But I replied: “Thou shalt not utter aught,

Traitor accursed! and to thy disgrace 110

True tidings only shall by me be brought.”

“Tell what thou wilt,” he cried, “but quit this place;

Yet be not silent, shouldst thou ’scape this trench

Of him² whose tongue wagg’d now at such a pace.

Here he bewails the lucre of the French; 115

Say that thou saw’st Duera’s offspring stand

Where endless frosts the sinners’ spirits quench.

² Buoso da Duera of Cremona, who spoke, v. 106. The defence of a pass was intrusted to him by the Ghibellines, but he was bribed to withdraw by Guy de Montfort, who then led the forces of Charles of Anjou through it to Parma.

If for the others any make demand,
 Why Beccheria,³ on whose windpipe swept
 The axe of Florence, bides on thy right hand. 120
 Beyond is one, Soldanier⁴ yclept,
 With Ganellone⁵ and him⁶ who once betray'd
 Faënza's gates while all her burghers slept."
 We had already parted from that shade,
 When in one pit⁷ two frozen phantoms cow'r'd, 125
 That of one's head the other's cowl was made.
 As bread by ravin'd hunger is devour'd,
 So where together brain and spine are lash'd
 Plung'd in the teeth of him who o'er him tow'r'd.
 On Menalippus' temples Tydeus gnash'd 130
 Even so his teeth,⁸ by wildest rage distract,
 As he the skull and parts about it mash'd.

³ Abbot of Vallombrosa, who was beheaded at Florence in 1258, on the discovery of a treaty which he had privately made with the Ghibellines. He was Legate of Pope Alexander IV.

⁴ In 1266 Gianni del Soldanieri headed a popular rising against his own (the Ghibelline) party.

⁵ The betrayer of Charlemagne's army at Roncesvalles.

⁶ Tribaldello de' Zambrasi in 1282 betrayed Faënza to the Bolognese.

⁷ This pit lies between the second and third compartments. Who these two culprits are will be shown in the next canto.

⁸ Before Thebes, Tydeus and Menalippus each wounded the other mortally; Tydeus survived, and calling for the body of his foe he spent his last strength in gnawing his brains.

“Oh ! thou, who showest by this brutish act
Thy hatred for the ghost thy passion gnaws,
Disclose thy reason, and I make this pact: 135
If thou complain'st of him with valid cause,
Then knowing thee and his offences, I
Will upon earth requite thee with applause,
If that wherewith I utter be not dry.”

THE THIRTY-THIRD CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT :—The story of Count Ugolino. The Poets proceed to the third compartment, which holds those who betrayed to the death friends who trusted in them.

THAT sinner lifted from the monstrous food
 His mouth, and on the tresses of the head
 That he behind had mangled, wip'd the blood.
 "Thou biddest me renew the grief," he said,
 "Which crushes down my heart in its despair 5
 To think of, ere one word be uttered.
 But if my words may be the seed to bear
 Harvest of shame unto the traitor-wretch
 I gnaw, thou'lt see me weep as I declare.
 I know thee not, nor yet how thou couldst reach 10
 This lowest region—but a Florentine
 Truly I deem thee when I hear thy speech.
 And thou must know I was Count Ugoline,¹
 And Pisa's Archbishop Ruggieri he;
 Learn why his shadow is so close to mine. 15

¹ Count Ugolino dei Gherardeschi, assisted by Ruggieri degli Ubaldini, the Archbishop of Pisa, expelled Nino Visconti di Gallura from that city, and possessed himself of supreme power. But Ruggieri, becoming envious and discontented, conspired with many of the nobles (v. 32) against him, and persuaded them that the

That I by reason of his perfidy,
I who so trusted him, was prisoner caught
And put to death, I need not tell to thee.
But never to thy knowledge hath been brought
How cruel was my death, and terrible— 20
Listen, and judge what evil he has wrought:
A little cranny in the narrow cell,
Wherein must many wretches yet be pent,
Whose name of 'famine' comes from me they
tell,
Had shown me many moons, which thereby sent 25
Their rays, ere I that evil slumber knew
Whereby the future's veil asunder rent.
This villain seem'd the lord and huntsman too,
Chasing the wolf and cubs upon the mount,²
That shuts out Lucca from the Pisans' view. 30
With famish'd bitches, zealous for the hunt,
Gualandi and Sismondi he had plac'd
Before him, with Lanfranchi in the front.
In shortest course aweary seem'd the chas'd
Father and children too, and now the stroke 35
Of tearing fangs upon their flanks was trac'd.

Count had betrayed the strongholds of the territory to the Florentines and Lucchese. The rest of the story is in the poem. The imprisonment took place in March, 1289.

² Monte San Giuliano. From Lucca to Pisa is only about fifteen miles.

But when I heard, before the morrow broke,
My children, who were with me, in their sleep
Weeping and clamouring for bread, I woke.
Oh! heartless, if thou feel'st not anguish deep, 40
Imagining what to my heart grew clear;
And if thou weep'st not, what can make thee
weep?

But as they woke, the moment drawing near
When they were wont to bring our food, recurr'd;
Tho' from the dream we all began to fear; 45
When far below, methought the gate I heard
Nail'd of that horrid tow'r, so fix'd my ken
On my boys' faces, but I spoke no word.

I wept not—so to stone I grew within;
They wept, and then my little Anselm cried: 50
'Father, thou lookest so—what hast thou then?'

Therefore I check'd all weeping, nor replied
Throughout that day, throughout the following
night,

Till on the world another sun did stride.
But soon as in the woful cell the light 55
A little spread around us, and I saw
Upon four faces mine own aspect quite,
Both hands in anguish I began to gnaw;
And they, believing that I acted so
From hunger, rising, nearer to me draw, 60

Exclaiming: 'Father, it were lesser woe
If thou shouldst eat of us—then strip again
The wretched weeds of flesh thou didst bestow.'
I calm'd me then, not to increase their pain;
That day, and all the next day, dumb we staid— 65
Alas! hard earth, why didst not yawn amain?
But when the fourth day follow'd on the shade,
Casting himself before my feet, my son
Gaddo exclaim'd: 'My father, give me aid!'
And on that spot he died—and one by one, 70
Even as you glare on me, I saw them drop
Between the fifth and sixth days; then begun,
Blind as I was upon their forms to grope:
Three days upon the dead my cries resound—
Then grief no longer could with hunger cope." 75
When he had said, with eyeballs twisted round
To the poor skull again his fangs did cling,
Grating the bone, and eager as a hound.
Pisa! reproach of all inhabiting
The lovely land where softest accents sigh, 80
Since those most near are slow at punishing,
Let Gorgona and Capraia³ hasten nigh
Damming up Arno, where it meets the seas,
To overwhelm thee, that no soul may fly!

³ Two islands near the mouth of the Arno.

What tho' the Count betray'd thy fortresses, 85
As was the rumour upon many a tongue,
That gave thee not the right to torture these.
For they were innocent, they were so young,
Thou younger Thebes! Hugo, Brigata, and
The other two whose names above are sung! 90
Further we journied, where another band
The rugged ice-bonds rivet;⁴ not below
Their heads are planted, but revers'd they stand.
Their very tears forbid their tears to flow,
For grief, which from the eyes escapeth not, 95
Is turn'd within, to make their torments grow.
The earliest tear-drops thick together clot,
Which like a crystal visor you might trace,
Filling beneath the brows the bowl-like spot.
Although, as happens with a callous place, 100
The numbing frost had utterly bereav'd
All power of sensation from my face,
Methought that still some current I perceiv'd;
So I exclaim'd: "Master, what stirreth this?
All vapour⁵ hence exhausted I believ'd." 105

⁴ The passage to Ptolemæa, called after the King of Egypt, who held out fair hopes to Pompey the Great when flying from Pharsalia, and when he had induced him to land murdered him. The sufferers are those who have betrayed friendship.

⁵ The heat of the sun is said to cause wind, and as it also draws the vapours from the earth, the question means: "Is not the sun's influence excluded here?"

“Soon we shall reach that point in the abyss,
Where thine own eyes shall answer for the wind,
Beholding why this breezy shower is.”⁶
Then one⁷ encrusted in the ice who pin’d,
Began: “Oh! shadows of such ruthlessness, 110
That this last station is to you assign’d,
Raise from my face this curtain of duress
That I may vent the grief wherewith I swell
Before the frosts again my tears repress.”
Then I: “If thou wouldst have me aid thee, tell 115
What thou hast been, and if I extricate
Thee not, may I be doom’d to chillest Hell!”
“Fra Alberigo, I,” he answer’d straight,
“Could not the garden’s evil fruit resist;
And now my fig’s requited with a date.” 120
“Thou,” I exclaimed, “dost thou no more exist?”
“What fate on earth my body may control,”
He answer’d me, “’tis little that I wist.
Such vantage hath this Ptolemæan hole,
That spirits often fall into its ways, 125
Ere Atropos impels them to the goal.

⁶ c. xxxiv., 50.

⁷ Fra Alberigo de’ Manfredi of Faënza, one of the “Jolly Brethren” (c. xxiii., 123). He pretended reconciliation with one of the fraternity, and invited him to a banquet at his castle of Cerata, and had him murdered by hired assassins. This was in 1285. The signal to these was the words: “Bring in the fruit,” which is alluded to in v. 120.

That thou with greater willingness mayst raze
The glassy tear-drops which mine eyes display,
Know that the soul so soon as it betrays,
As I did, from its frame is torn away, 130
And till the cycle of its time is full,
It is abandon'd to a Demon's sway.
Headlong it ruins down into this pool;
Perchance on earth his body may appear,
Whom here behind me endless winters cool. 135
Thou knowest him if thou art newly here;
He is Sêr Branca d'Oria,⁸ and fleet
Since he was doom'd hath vanish'd many a year."
"I deem," I said, "thou trick'st me with deceit;
For surely Branca d'Oria is not dead, 140
But still wears garments, still doth sleep, drink, eat."
"Not yet where boils the clammy pitch," he said,
"In Malebranche, had the soul arriv'd
Of Michael Zanche, when in his own stead
This soul already left a devil hiv'd 145
In his own body, and his kinsman's—he
With whom the treachery had been contriv'd.
But now forthwith extend thy hand to me;
Open mine eyes"—but I my hand restrain'd,
For rudeness unto him was courtesy. 150

⁸ A Genoese, who, with his nephew, murdered his friend Michael Zanche, Governor of Logodore in Sardinia, who is condemned as a trafficker, c. xxii., 88.

Oh ! Genoese, oh ! people deep engrain'd
In vice, that all good custom have revers'd,
Why has the earth a single one retain'd?
For with Romagna's spirit most accurs'd⁹
I found your fellow-townsmen—in the soul
For vices in Cocytus' stream immers'd,
Whose body seems on earth alive and whole!

155

⁹ That is Fra Alberigo.

THE THIRTY-FOURTH CANTO.

THE ARGUMENT :—At last the waving wings of Satan are seen, and after entering the fourth compartment, called Giudecca, the Poets reach himself. He is described, and those whom he torments. All has now been seen—and Virgil, carrying Dante, climbs upwards by the shags of the Devil's hairy body, till he has quitted the Ninth Circle. Here he explains to his disciple the construction of Hell, and the situation of Lucifer, and then leading him on again, the Poets emerge from the abyss, and stand beneath the glories of the Heavens.

“ ‘**T**HE banners of Hell's monarch now advance'¹
 Towards us! therefore,” my good Master cries,
 “Gaze round if he himself may meet thy glance.”
 Even as seems when mighty mists arise,
 Or twilight's gloaming round our zone is cast, 5
 A whirling windmill that still distant lies:
 Methought I saw even such a structure vast;
 Wherefore I kept behind my Guide, for here
 No other refuge was, to shun the blast.
 For now (I shape it into verse with fear) 10
 I stood² where ice the spirits doth enshrine,
 Who yet, as straws in glass, shine thro' it clear.

¹ “*Vexilla regis prodeunt inferni*,” the first line of a hymn to the Holy Cross. It begins this canto in the original, but cannot be preserved in English.

² The fourth compartment, called Giudecca, from Judas, the abode of those who have betrayed to the death their benefactors.

Some stand erect, and others lie supine—

One on his heels—another on his crown—

Some arch-like to their feet their heads incline. 15

But soon as we had so far travell'd down

As Virgil listed, that he might be view'd,

The creature who did once such beauty own,

He leapt aside, and stopp'd me where I stood:

“Lo! Dîs himself! 'tis here that thou must seek,” 20

He said, “to don the arms of fortitude.”

Oh! thou my reader, never bid me speak

What shuddering and hoarseness now arriv'd,

I write it not—all language would be weak.

Behold, I neither perish'd—nor surviv'd! 25

Oh! gifted spirits, ponder well my state, .

Being of life and death at once depriv'd.

The Ruler of the kingdom desolate

Above the ice full half his chest had thrown,

And I might better with a giant mate 30

Than their whole frames could match his arms alone;

Well therefore the whole carcass you may heed

That should consort with limbs so hugely grown.

If he was fair as now he's foul indeed,

And 'gainst his Maker rear'd his forehead lewd, 35

All evil may in sooth from him proceed.

What marvel pass'd upon me as I view'd

Upon his head three faces manifest;

One in the front, and that was scarlet-hued.

And of the two that are together press'd 40
And o'er the shoulders with the third unite,
The three combining at the highest crest,
The left in colour seemed to my sight
Like dwellers where the Nile flows to the plain;
The third was partly yellow, partly white. 45
Beneath each visage issued pinions twain,
Stupendous as befitted such a bird;
I never saw such sails upon the main.
They had no feathers, but were thickly furr'd
Likest to bats, and flutter'd to and fro, 50
So that three rushing currents from him stirr'd.
By them Cocytus' stream is frozen so;
Six eyes were weeping, and a gory rheum
And gushing tears adown three chins did flow.
But in each mouth his cranching teeth consume 55
And mash a sinner like a huge machine;
Three in this fashion meet their wretched doom.
To him in front the crushing was, I ween,
Nought to the ceaseless clawing; for the skin
From the sad spine was often rended clean. 60
"The soul above," my Master did begin,
"The most tormented is Iscariot;
His legs protrude, his head remains within.
And of the two whose heads below are brought,
See Brutus from the swarthy muzzle fall; 65
Behold his writhings, yet he utters nought.

.

The other soul is Cassius, huge and tall ;
But night remounts—the moment is at hand
To get us hence, for we have travers'd all !”
Then I embrac'd his neck at his command, 70
He watch'd till time and place were opportune,
And now, as wide enough the wings expand,
Fast to the ragged sides he grappled soon,
And tuft by tuft descended presently
Between the dense fell and the frore lagoon. 75
But having gain'd the spot whereat the thigh
Springs from the rounded haunch's thickest swell,
My Master with great toil and agony
Turn'd back his head where erst his feet did dwell,
Thence like a man ascending grasp'd the hairs, 80
So that methought we turn'd again to Hell.
“Cling to me tightly, such must be our stairs,”
Panting like one exhausted Virgil cried,
“By which we may depart these evil lairs.”
Out thro' the fissure of a rock he hied ; 85
First on its marge my Master seated me,
Then cautiously he glided to my side.
I rais'd mine eyes, believing I should see,
As I had left him, Lucifer once more,
But lo ! his legs towards us tower'd free ! 90
Now if my senses were confounded sore
It may astound the people indiscreet,
Discerning not what point I travers'd o'er.

“ Arise then,” said my Master, “ to thy feet!
 Long is the journey, difficult the way, 95
 And now by middle tierce the sun we meet.”³
 No palace terrace this where we did stay,
 But in the rock a natural prison-cave,
 Whose floor was rugged, where scant light might
 stray.
 “ Before I tear me, Master, from this grave,” 100
 Said I, when ’neath my feet I felt the ground,
 “ Vouchsafe some speech that may from error save;
 Where is the ice? and wherefore is he bound
 Thus upside down? tell me what is the cause?
 How has the sun so swiftly journied round 105
 From eve to morning?” And his answer was:
 “ Thou deem’st thyself beyond the centre yet,
 There where I grasp’d the hateful worm that gnaws
 His way thro’ earth; and while my face was set
 Downwards ’twas so; but as I turn’d we pass’d 110
 That central point, where ev’ry weight has met.

3

“ E già il sole a mezza terza riede.”

The day of twelve hours is divided into four equal parts, called terza, sesta, nona, and vespro. Mezza terza is therefore an eighth part of the day. In v. 68, Virgil said, whilst the Poets were still in the northern hemisphere, that night was remounting; of course in the southern, day would then be dawning. Here they have now arrived, and as an eighth of the day has passed, it follows that it is an hour and a half after sunrise on Easter Sunday, and that an hour and a half has been occupied by their journey from Giudecca.

For thou hast reach'd the hemisphere at last
Antipodal to that renowned Earth,
Beneath whose firmament the doom was cast
Of Him⁴ whose life was stainless as His birth; 115
For now thy foot is on the little sphere,
Which to Giudecca is the other girth.
There it is evening when 'tis morning here;
And yonder fiend, whose fur help'd us to scale
This height, is fix'd as erst he did appear. 120
'Twas here he fell from Heav'n's eternal pale,
And earth, which far in this direction spread,
In terror of him made the sea her veil,
Recoiling to our hemisphere, and fled
To shun him, leaving here the empty space 125
Stretching beyond, and form'd the mountain-head."
Beneath, as far from Beelzebub's dread place
As the whole tomb⁵ embraces, is a spot
That not by sight but by the sound you trace

⁴ Our Saviour. As has been already noted, Dante places Jerusalem as the central point of the northern hemisphere, and he supposes the opposite, or southern one, to be entirely sea, excepting on the antipodal point of Jerusalem, where he places the Mountain of Purgatory. Thus from the centre of the body of Lucifer to the southern surface of the earth, it is as far as the whole depth of Hell, which reaches from the centre to the northern surface; v. 127.

⁵ That is Hell. The word "tomba" is often used for Hell, as will have been observed in reading the poem.

A streamlet makes, that, leaping thro' a grot 130
And winding downward with a gentle course,
Hath with its watery teeth a channel got.
Thence following upon its hidden source,
We came to view the gleaming world again,
And careless to repose our shatter'd force, 135
He mounted first, I hasting in his train,
Till thro' a rounded crevice nought debars
Our sight of glories that the Heav'ns contain,
Whence issuing, we once more beheld the stars.

THE END.





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